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OCTOBER, 1916

No. 3

AINSLEE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

CONTENTS

Cover Design	<i>The Kinneys</i>	
Fargo of the Gaudy Lake	<i>William Almon Wolff</i>	1
Complete Novelette		
A Thunderstorm. Verse	<i>Elizabeth Gunn</i>	35
The One-Sixteenth. Short Story	<i>Marie Conway Oemler</i>	36
Triolet. Verse	<i>Daniel E. Wheeler</i>	49
Nix on the Slaughter. Short Story	<i>Allen Sangree</i>	50
Holding the Mirror Up to Art. Short Story	<i>Walter Prichard Eaton</i>	62
A Pagan Passes. Verse	<i>Marguerite Mooers Marshall</i>	76
The Woman Who Broke the Rule	<i>May Edginton</i>	77
Serial		
Song. Verse	<i>Leonie A. F. Bispham</i>	105
Will Power. Short Story	<i>Bonnie R. Ginger</i>	106
Ambition. Verse	<i>Lucia Chamberlain</i>	118
Stories of the Super-Women. Series	<i>Albert Payson Terhune</i>	119
<i>Marie de Brinvilliers: The Woman Without a Soul</i>		
The Hollister Ghost. Short Story	<i>Ethel Train</i>	128
Shamus Dan. Short Story	<i>Maurice Joy</i>	138
The Wayfarers. Verse	<i>Arthur Wallace Peach</i>	150
Plays and Players	<i>Alan Dale</i>	151
Ainslee's Open Door		156
<i>Will Polygamy Help Europe?—Gypsies in Motor Cars— More About Birth Control</i>		
Talks With Ainslee's Readers		160

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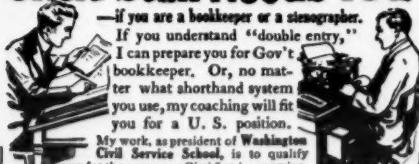
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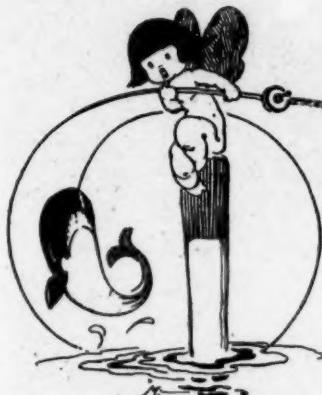
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Fargo of the Gaudy Lake

By William Almon Wolff

Author of "Hung Upon the Clothesline," "Ebenezer Timpson's Son," etc.

CHAPTER I.

HERE were passages in John Fargo's life that seemed to testify to his possession of a sense of humor. But for the time being it was in abeyance. The city of Grantham had been convulsed by what it chose to consider a joke, and Fargo was probably the only man in town who had not, in the last few days, been moved to mirth by that jest. For this there was the best of reasons; like most jokes, this one had a victim, and Fargo was playing that unpleasant part.

The man who can really enjoy a joke that has been turned against him has been marked by destiny for a high estate. He need envy no one; the thought of the dignity of the President of the United States, or of the emoluments of Mr. Charles Chaplin, need give him no concern. Fargo, had he been able to walk unmoved through the streets of Grantham, conscious of the smiles, the swift and mocking glances, that followed him from man, woman, and

child, would have been something more than human. And that he was not. He felt as almost any one in his place would have felt; he was angry, and he was possessed of a consuming desire to be revenged upon Henry Spencer, the man who had made him the laughing-stock of a whole community. Also, he needed some physical outlet for his nerves and his emotions, and he found it in the rather reckless driving of a high-speed roadster through the city streets and the roads of the adjacent countryside.

His own society palled upon him; moreover, he wanted to talk about his troubles. For three days he resented, with growing bitterness, the absence of Martin Bruce, his lawyer and the one close friend he had in Grantham, although it was the city of his birth. When Bruce did come back to town, after a business trip to Chicago, Fargo gave him no breathing space, but bore him off at once to play golf and to talk at the Grantham Country Club.

"Steady!" said Bruce. "What's the row, John?"

"Spencer," said Fargo. "Damn him for an unprincipled old pirate! You know my country place? You know what I've spent on it and the time I've put in on getting it right? Lord—I worked to make that place an ornament to the city! We've never had any suburban life here. I waited two years to get just the architect I wanted. I've had the best landscape man in America. And if there was one thing that was better than another about the whole outfit, it was the way they managed the water. They diverted that creek and gave me a lake and— Oh, well, you've seen it! And—"

He seemed to be overcome by his emotions.

"And what?" asked Bruce. "What's wrong?"

"Martin! When I got back, expecting to find it all ready, I went out there. The lake was pink! And it kept changing color every minute! Pink, purple, dirty brown, streaky red! Spencer had stuck a beast of a dye factory farther up the creek, and all his waste discharges into it! My place was ruined!"

Martin Bruce, as Fargo turned to stare at him, had just time to smooth out the corners of his mouth.

"Hard luck!" he said. "I suppose you went to Spencer in your usual tactful way?"

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Fargo hotly. "I went to him, of course. He laughed at me! Said the water would be clean enough evenings and Saturdays and Sundays—and holidays! Told me if I was a business man, with something to keep me occupied, like my father, a thing like this wouldn't bother me! What business is it of his what I do?"

"Well?" said Bruce. "What then?"

"I thought he was trying to hold me up. So I offered to buy his factory—told him I was willing to be bled if he

didn't make it too steep. And he got sore and wouldn't talk to me!"

Bruce whistled.

"If you'd waited for me!" he said. "Lord, John—what did you want to get his back up for? He's as obstinate as a mule. You've got no case legally. He's within his rights."

"Hang his rights!" exploded Fargo. "Do you mean to tell me there's no way for me to reach him?"

"None that I can think of, offhand. I'll see him for you, but if you've made him angry—well, it won't be easy to move him!"

Fargo glared, and for the rest of the trip to the club was silent. But as he drove, he was thinking, and his thoughts were savage. He knew that Spencer's remark about the indifference he would feel if he were a business man represented the view of Grantham as a whole. Grantham had always rather resented his failure to devote himself to the task of building up a fortune even greater than the one his father had left him. He represented something that was novel and unwelcome in the experience of the thriving, hustling mid-Western town—a leisure class.

Fargo, unlike most of the boys he had known when he had worn knickerbockers, had gone East to school, and had taken his degree at an Eastern college instead of at the State university. His father had been too busy to pay much attention to him; he had taken it for granted that his son would, in time, follow in his footsteps. But at college John Fargo, liberally supplied with money, had become, by virtue of his athletic prowess, a leader in a set made up of the sons of rich men in cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston.

He had seen no reason for plunging into the sort of life his father had led. He would have all the money a man could need; it seemed to him that if he had a good time and dabbled a little,

perhaps, in literature, he would be doing all that was necessary. His father might have disabused him of that notion, but Henry Fargo had died just after his son had graduated from college, and John Fargo had become his own master.

He liked the East; to him Grantham seemed crude, new, provincial. Only a curious sort of feeling that he owed it to his father to do so had made him determine to spend part of each year in the town. To do so in comfort, since the town house in which he had been born and brought up seemed to him impossible as an abode, he had built his country home. Grantham had smiled at that idea; it had roared, and taken Spencer's side whole-heartedly, when the truth about the dyed waters came out.

"Martin," Fargo said, when they were on the links, "I can't sit down under this thing! I've got to get even with Spencer! My father could have done it."

"I suppose he could," said Bruce, rather soberly. "But you're not your father, John. You don't seem to understand that things have changed in this town. Do you know, for example, that Spencer's got a bigger interest in the Fargo National Bank now than you have?"

Fargo flushed slightly. Imperfect as was his knowledge of business, he had had an idea that he might use his influence with the bank to embarrass Spencer.

"I've tried to warn you of what was happening," Bruce went on. "Your father was the biggest man in Grantham. That's why Fargo Street is the main business street—why we have the Fargo Theater and the Fargo National Bank and the Hotel Fargo. But it takes work to keep up with all that—and you haven't worked.

"Grantham has been growing, and your interests have been standing still.

There have been reorganizations, expansions, in all the things you're interested in. You haven't played the game, and it's not been for lack of warnings from me. Take the Fargo National. They doubled the capital last year. You ignored my letters. You used to have a forty-per-cent interest, and, in effect, control. Now your interest is twenty per cent—and Spencer is the biggest stockholder. And it's the same in most of the other things. Spencer's got the position in Grantham now that your father had and that you inherited—because he's kept on the job. He's built up a small store into one of the biggest department stores in the State, and he's expanded in all directions—just as your father did."

"I see," said Fargo slowly. "In other words, I'm not the biggest frog in the puddle any longer?"

"No; because you're the same-size frog, and the puddle has grown."

"Well—I'm going to keep after Spencer, just the same. Only I see that I'll have to take some other line."

"Better drop it," said Bruce. "You haven't got the sort of leverage your father could have used. Take politics, for example. Henry Fargo didn't go in very much for politics, but when he did whistle, Gormley came running. If you've got any notion in your head of trying to sick Gormley onto Spencer, forget it. Gormley's a wise man, which is why he's been boss of this district, with both parties in his vest pocket, for twenty years. He'd laugh at you if you tried to use him against Spencer!"

Once more Bruce had anticipated something that Fargo had meant to do. Fargo's expression grew thoughtful.

"I've had enough golf," he said. "Let's quit. You're a Job's comforter, Martin, but I guess you're about right, in the main."

They changed, in silence, and then went up to the great living room of the

club for a drink. Through an open window came snatches of talk and laughter from a table on the piazza, where some girls were having tea. Suddenly Fargo heard his own name and, following it, a gale of laughter. He winced at that.

"What did he want to build his old house here for, anyhow?" one of the girls asked. "He doesn't know any Grantham people. I used to know him when I was in short skirts, but I haven't seen him since he went to college."

"Who knows why a man like that does anything?" echoed another.

"Just the same, I'd like to see that colored pond!" giggled a third.

Bruce, struggling with a smile, glanced at Fargo, who was scowling.

"Oh, come off, John!" he said. "You ought to be able to see that it's funny, even if it is your ox that's being gored."

"Well—I don't!" said Fargo. And then grimly: "Who are they?"

"No quarter?" suggested Bruce, laughing. "Have you declared a war of extermination? The one who spoke first is Edith Price—her father's president of the Fargo National. The one who giggled is Molly Brandon. And the other is Janet Spencer—your man's niece."

Fargo's eyebrows went up. He was trying to remember the girls. And then a chivalrous instinct made him go out by the rear piazza, to save the girls from seeing him and guessing that he had overheard their conversation. But they had started in the same direction, and saw the two men as they came out.

Even in the quick glimpse he had, Fargo was sure that he had identified Janet Spencer. She was smiling when he first saw her; while the others abruptly checked their laughter, she continued to smile. Their eyes met for a moment, and he saw that there was defiance, as well as amusement, in her eyes. It was as if she meant to warn him that she was on the other side, that

she took her uncle's part. It was all over in a moment, but Fargo carried away with him the memory of the girl's eyes.

CHAPTER II.

There was no real doubt in Fargo's mind as to the truth of what Bruce had told him. But that did not prevent him from dwelling upon the injury that Spencer had done him. It did, however, save him from making open threats. He was as determined as he had ever been to make Spencer pay in full for the wanton discoloration of his stream and lake, but he kept his determination to himself, because it was so obvious that it would take him a long time and a good deal of concentrated, patient effort to discover the means to his end. He decided, with regret, that if he wanted to be revenged upon Spencer, he must stay in Grantham and that led him to the further decision that if he was to stay in Grantham, he would have to live down the joke that had been played upon him.

Fargo was not without a certain degree of good, hard sense. He had inherited that, as well as his money, from Henry Fargo. And he had inherited something more—just that quality that made it so impossible for him to let Spencer carry off the honors without a desperate attempt to retrieve them.

After his talk with Bruce, he was careful to hide his resentment. He tried to make Grantham believe that he shared the general view of the episode, and in this he was moderately successful, after the first edge of the jest had worn off. People will not go on indefinitely laughing at a man who does not seem to mind their laughter, and Fargo found, after a time, that he could get through a good many days without being reminded of his humiliation.

For the first time since his boyhood, he tried to enter into the life of Grantham, and it was not long before a cer-

tain reaction in his favor set in. He surprised the older men, who had been scornful of his idleness, by the interest that he suddenly displayed in his own affairs. Only Bruce, knowing him as he did, was suspicious. But he told Bruce nothing of his real plans, and Bruce asked no questions.

Partly because it was in keeping with the rôle he was playing, and partly because he needed diversion, Fargo was at some pains to establish friendly relations with the younger people in Grantham whom he had known in his school days. His country place, after winter came, played a large part in his success in doing this. The freezing of the lake hid the offensive colors, and Grantham had a revelation of the possibilities of a country home. There was skating such as Grantham had never dreamed of in the past; there were skiing and tobogganing of an extraordinarily and insidiously delightful sort. In the house there was a wonderful floor for dancing and an abundance of mechanical means of producing dance music. And Fargo produced a hostess and chaperon in the person of an aunt who shared his preference for the East, but was induced to come and help him.

His social activity had one curious result—it brought him into close touch with Janet Spencer, for she was constantly thrown with him. She excelled every other girl in all the winter games, as he excelled the other men. And since she seemed disposed to ignore his quarrel with her uncle, he saw no reason for letting it stand between them. For that matter, indeed, Spencer himself ignored it. Fargo had lost his temper for a moment, and he guessed that Spencer would never give in now in the matter of the factory; but when they met, Spencer was invariably cordial.

Janet Spencer was a revelation to Fargo in many ways. He found in her a downright frankness that was strange to him, and pleasing, too, after its nov-

elty had worn off. She had opinions of her own on every subject; he found that she was deeply and intelligently interested in a good many things to which he had never paid any attention. Rather grudgingly at first, he found himself sending for books she had mentioned, and reading them, simply to avoid calling into her eyes the look that sometimes greeted his confession that he had never heard of some book she admired. She was a leader in the State fight for woman's suffrage; she had interested herself in a number of reform movements; and yet she was not by any means a bluestocking. She danced just as well as she skated; if she was not beautiful, she was an unusually pretty girl.

She surprised Fargo one day, after their acquaintance had begun to ripen, by an utterly unheralded reference to the day of their encounter at the country club.

"You heard us laughing at you, didn't you?" she said.

"I believe I did," he said, with a smile, after a moment's thought.

"And you hated us, didn't you? And especially me—if you found out who I was from Martin Bruce?"

"I believe that's true, too," he confessed.

She laughed.

"Oh, I knew it!" she said. "I had a good look at you, you know. I'm glad you don't hate me any longer, John."

"How do you know I don't?" he asked, amused.

"Because you can't," she said promptly. "I like you, you see. And one can't hate any one who likes one, of course. One tries sometimes—I have—but it doesn't pay."

"That's fair enough," he said. But then he frowned slightly. And he was moved to tell her what he had not told even to Bruce. "But look here, Janet. I don't want to sail under false colors.

I haven't changed my mind about your uncle. I'm going to get even with him if I can."

"I wish you wouldn't," she said. "He's an awfully hard person to get even with. He's a dear, and he's done everything in the world for me—but I know that he can be very hard. Don't you think you'd better let well enough alone? He's quite ready to be friends with you."

Fargo's eyebrows went up.

"Why not?" he asked. "It's gone all his way so far, you see."

She sighed faintly.

"Well—" she said. "Oh, I don't care! Have it out! Men are queer. But don't quarrel with me, please. I'll be as neutral as I can without being disloyal to him."

They shook hands on that, and Fargo was well pleased. He liked Janet immensely. But he didn't like her quite well enough to give up his grudge against her uncle. He didn't like her enough even to see that what he planned might threaten their friendship. Then, too, he had no real plan as yet.

CHAPTER III.

It was more or less by chance that Fargo at last found what seemed likely to be an opening for an attack on Spencer. It was chance that led him to read, in a magazine he had picked up to pass away a time of waiting in Bruce's office, an article that dealt with the secrets that lie securely hidden in newspaper offices all over the country. He learned of the countless envelopes that are filed in every well-regulated newspaper office, containing carefully garnered facts concerning citizens whose merits or defects make them of interest to the public at large. According to the writer of the article, every newspaper has in its possession facts concerning prominent citizens the publication of which would create a sensation, or

could easily obtain such facts. The writer's point of view was that newspapers did not deserve their reputation as scoundalmongers. But Fargo found a hint in what he read.

Among the properties that he had inherited was the *Grantham Bugle*, the leading newspaper of the town, one of the two morning dailies, in fact. His title to the *Bugle* was still unclouded; he owned practically all the stock. And as he followed out the line of thought that the article had suggested, Fargo wondered why he had never considered before using his paper as a weapon against Spencer. It was the ideal weapon, as he saw now. He had no doubt that Spencer would prove to be vulnerable to such an attack.

"If that old pirate has never done anything to be ashamed of, I'll—I'll eat my hat!" he exclaimed to himself.

And yet, when it came to putting his idea into execution, he found that there were difficulties in the way. He had no scruples as to Spencer. He did not doubt for a moment that he was justified in what he meant to do. And yet he balked at what had, in the first flush of the idea, seemed the simple task of going into the office of the *Bugle* and giving his orders to old Blaine, the active head of the paper, who was, in view of Fargo's own indifference to the *Bugle*, the highest authority on the sheet. He decided, in the end, that his method of approach must be indirect.

Blaine, an old man by now, could not quite conceal his surprise at Fargo's unheralded appearance in his office.

"What can I do for you, John?" he asked. "Anything wrong?"

"Not a thing," said Fargo. "The paper's doing splendidly. But I've been looking into my affairs a bit lately. I came to the conclusion that it is pretty nearly criminal for a man to know so little about his own business as I do. So I've come in to have a look and see what makes the wheels go round here."

"I see," said Blaine. But he didn't—yet. "You'd like me to show you around the shop, I suppose?"

"N-no," said Fargo. "Could you give me a desk somewhere and let me spend some time here every day, so that I can get the hang of things? I'd like to learn something about the way a newspaper is run. I believe I'd rather devote my time to the *Bugle* than to any other property I own."

"All right," said Blaine.

He made no comment. But he fore-saw stormy days. Blaine liked John Fargo well enough, but he had worshiped his father, and the son did not measure up to the sire in Blaine's eyes. But there could be no doubt that the *Bugle* was John Fargo's paper; he could do what he pleased in its office.

So, in the course of a day or two, he had his desk, which, at his own re-quest, was in a little room that opened into the big editorial room where edi-tors and reporters were quartered. He met the staff, and found himself both surprised and impressed.

He expected Murray, the managing editor, to be a man of middle age at least, and he was amazed to discover that the man who was responsible for the daily appearance of the paper, and who was second in authority only to Blaine, was a big, dynamic six-footer, if anything a year or two younger than Fargo himself. Actually he had just turned thirty. He was cordial to Fargo, but not subservient; he looked at him with cold blue eyes that had a question in them, and his red hair and fighting jaw were sufficient evidence that he asked no favors.

All the staff surprised Fargo, for that matter. He found that youth was the dominant note of the office. He gathered that Blaine, an old man himself, liked to have young men about, and felt able to tone them down when it was necessary. The one exception to the rule of youth, except for Blaine him-

self, was Coffin, the advertising and business manager and Blaine's chief assistant in the business department of the paper. This was a man who was nearing fifty—a man with thinning, grayish hair and a curiously lined face. He had the tired eyes of a cynic—the eyes of a man who might once have had great dreams, but was content, now, to leave dreams to those who knew less of life than he himself had had to learn.

It was Murray and Coffin who seemed to Fargo to be the big, signifi-cant men of the staff; Blaine, whom he had known all his life, he was rather disposed to discount, as an old fogey. The reporters and the minor editors, like Groome, the city editor, and Dar-row, who took his place at night, Fargo grew acquainted with more slowly. But he liked them, and he was impressed by their efficiency.

He moved slowly in the nurturing of his design against Spencer. Day by day it seemed to him more difficult to do the obvious thing and give a direct order. To do so, he saw, would in-volve an explanation of his own feel-ing, and he was not sure that Murray, for example, would sympathize with his design. It seemed better, on the whole, to wait; to learn the ropes for himself and perhaps to come upon some item in the files that would supply a legitimate point of departure for the attack on Spencer.

Gradually, despite himself, he began to feel the fascination of the office and the work. He had expected to be bored; he found himself more and more interested as his understanding of the complicated process of getting out a newspaper widened. He asked endless questions and got patient, careful an-swers. But he understood, somehow, that busy men found time to enlighten him, not because he owned the paper and was the arbiter of their destinies, but because they were so keenly inter-ested in their work that they were eager

to explain it to him or to any one else who might display an intelligent interest. But none of his questions had to do with the subject that was nearest to him; he meant so to establish his reputation as one thirsting for knowledge that when he finally came to his point, the whole staff would be prepared to hear him ask about anything.

At first he was in the office, in the main, during the day. But when he learned of the tenser, more vital atmosphere that prevailed at night, his practice changed. He took to dropping into the office late in the evening; often after he had been calling on Janet Spencer. And one night, when he had left her early, he walked into the editorial room about ten o'clock, to find it charged with electricity.

A glance at Darrow showed him that that young man was doing even more work than usual, and the whole office reflected his activity. Fargo learned almost at once that there had been a bad wreck just outside Grantham; the limited had run into a freight, and the wreck was one of the worst in the history of the railway that ran through Grantham. Fargo walked over to Darrow's desk.

"How about this wreck?" he demanded. "Tell me about it—"

Darrow jumped.

"Oh, good Lord!" he said. "Do you think I've got nothing to do but talk to you? For Heaven's sake, go away somewhere until the paper's out! I can't attend to you now, Mr. Fargo."

Even worse than Darrow's words was his manner. Plainly he didn't expect an answer. He left Fargo gaping and went back to his work. Fargo gasped once. He felt himself flushing a bright scarlet under that stinging rebuke—and tingling, too. He turned away, and in a moment a copy reader, one of the older men, came up to him.

"Can I tell you what you want to know, Mr. Fargo?" he asked gently.

"I hope you'll make allowances for Darrow. He's new to his job and anxious to make good, and this is his first big story. He didn't mean anything by what he said—"

Fargo swung around.

"Make allowances for Darrow?" he said, in a curious tone. "That's easy, Crewe. But who the devil's going to make allowances for me? I ought to be kicked for bothering him, and when he has time to listen to me, I'm going to apologize to him. But you can tell me something, all right. How can I help? If there's nothing else I can do, I'll go home and get out of the way."

Now it was Crewe's turn to be astonished. But he understood, somehow, that Fargo was in earnest.

"Well—I don't know," he said, "but you might be able to help. The thing we want most, and that's hardest to get on a story like this, is the railroad's side. Not a formal statement, but a real, human explanation. A reporter hasn't a chance with any railroad man of any importance on a night like this. But if you happen to know any one personally—"

"I do," said Fargo crisply. "There's Emerson, the division super. I play golf with him sometimes. He might talk. My car is downstairs. I'll beat it out to the wreck and see what I can do."

Crewe smiled as he saw Fargo dash through the door, for all the world like a cub reporter starting on his first big assignment.

CHAPTER IV.

Fargo, exceeding the speed limit recklessly as he ran out to the scene of the wreck in his motor, was fired by just one desire. He wanted to make up for his mistake; he wanted to wipe out the look of disdain he had seen in Darrow's eyes, the stinging contempt of the efficient man for the trifler. He

thought there would be no trouble. He knew Emerson pretty well; he would snatch a moment with him and explain the advantage to the railroad of letting the *Bugle* set forth its excuses in the next morning's issue.

But he reckoned without a good many circumstances. For when he had come to the scene of the wreck, guided by an ominous red glare from burning cars, and made his way through the curious, morbid crowd, by virtue of his reporter's star, he found that the Emerson who was directing the rescue work and the task of clearing the line was an Emerson wholly different from the genial man with whom he had a golfing acquaintance. Emerson was doing the work of a dozen men, and Fargo's experience with Darrow saved him from the mistake of trying to approach him.

Just as Fargo gave up his design, however, he caught a glimpse of the man to whom Emerson was speaking. His face was vaguely familiar, and at a phrase of Emerson's, Fargo placed him.

"Get out of this, Mr. Johns!" he heard Emerson say. "You can't help, and you ought to be in a hospital. God—it's a wonder you got out at all!"

Fargo jumped. It was Caspar Johns, vice president of the road, and Fargo suddenly understood the truth—that Johns had been a passenger on the wrecked train and that his arm was in a sling now as the result of injuries he had sustained. On a sudden impulse, he went up to the vice president, as Johns, swaying, turned away.

"I'm afraid you're hurt, Mr. Johns," he said. "Won't you let me take you in to Grantham in my car? I've got it near here, in the road. Do you remember me? I was in college with Fred."

"I—— Oh—it's young Fargo, isn't it?" said Johns weakly. "Of course I

remember you. Thanks, my boy. I guess Emerson's right. I'd better get out of this. My God—it's awful!"

His nerves seemed to be completely shattered. All the way into town, he talked volubly, eagerly, of the wreck and of the blind-chance that had caused it, overriding every possible precaution. And when they reached town and Fargo suggested a hospital, he snorted:

"A drink's what I need—and a chance to lie down. I've got to be on the job early in the morning."

Fargo took him into the Union Club and filled that self-written prescription. Then he confessed.

"I want you to let me print some of what you told me in my paper, the *Bugle*," he said. "I can't think of a better way to disarm criticism of your road——"

"I didn't know you were a reporter," said Johns nervously. "I wouldn't have talked so freely——"

"I'll print nothing without your permission," said Fargo. "I'm not a real reporter, either. I happen to own one of the papers here. But I hope you'll see this my way. Emerson hasn't time to give the boys the road's side of this wreck, and you must know the sort of roasting it'll get. You and the other men at the top will be described as a lot of callous, money-grubbing brutes, thinking only of your profits. And I want the public to see you as I have tonight. I want them to know how you've suffered—to understand that you're a human being and that you're as broken up by this horrible thing as if your own son had been killed."

It was a pretty eloquent plea that Fargo made, and Johns was too weary to resist him. At half past twelve Fargo tore across the street to the *Bugle* office. He had written down, as well as he could, what he had seen and what Johns had said. Johns had forced himself to scan what had been written and

had scrawled a shaky signature to follow his statement.

The office was at the very height of the night's activity when Fargo returned. The night editor was up in the composing room; Darrow was doing a dozen things at once, pushing the story through for the first edition. And when he saw Fargo leaning over his desk, he groaned.

"Oh, Lord!" he said. "Again? I'm still tied up, Mr. Fargo—"

"Oh, go to hell, Darrow!" said Fargo. "I don't care how busy you are! I guess you've got time to handle an exclusive interview I got with Vice President Johns, of the road, after they dragged him out of the wreck with a broken arm."

Darrow leaped for the sheaf of papers in Fargo's hand.

"Johns!" he cried. "We didn't even know he was here! Oh, this is some scoop! Here—get this up, Crewe—make a big box of it to lead the whole story! I'll go make room for it!"

Crewe took the copy as Darrow dashed for the composing room. He took time to wink at Fargo, and Fargo grinned at him. And then Fargo, like any other cub reporter, swaggered over to the water cooler and pretended not to know that the whole office had its eyes on him. He didn't go home. He waited until the paper had been put to bed. And then, with all the other men who didn't make their escape and go home, he went down to Schmitt's lunch room in the alley, and they talked over the wild night's work until the sun was streaking the eastern sky with lines of gray and pink. His last memory was of a mighty slap on the back from Darrow.

"You're all right, Fargo—take it from me!" said Darrow. "If you weren't a mere millionaire who inherited a newspaper, you'd be some reporter!"

CHAPTER V.

Fargo's achievement on the night of the wreck changed the attitude of every man on the staff of the *Bugle* toward him. Murray, who had done little more, until then, than tolerate him, came up to him the next day, his white teeth showing as he grinned, his big hand extended.

"I woke Darrow up to find out which of my reporters had a bonus coming to him for that Johns story," he said, "and it seems there's nothing doing in the bonus line."

"I don't know about that," said Fargo very solemnly. "I think you owe me something, Murray. Suppose you take me to lunch?"

It was so ordered, and Murray revealed a side of himself that Fargo had not seen before. He was boyishly enthusiastic about what Fargo had done, and as they smoked their cigars after lunch, he launched into one story after another, relating the saga of the newspaper game as it is played from coast to coast. Also, he made certain things clear to the paper's owner.

"You had us puzzled for a while, Fargo," he said, dropping his formal manner for the first time. "We thought you were sort of—well, slumming. But a man who could jump in and pull off what you did last night— And then Darrow—"

He flushed and stopped.

"Oh, I know what you mean," said Fargo, with a laugh. "He called me down good and hard, and it was coming to me. You thought I wasn't the sort to take that the right way, I guess?"

"Well—do you blame me?" asked Murray. "We couldn't tell that you really were interested in the game the way we are ourselves. And—well, I suppose it's snobbish, in a way, but about the only thing we newspaper men do have that we can be proud of is

our independence. A good newspaper man knows he can always get a job, and he doesn't like the idea of kowtowing to any one. I guess that was what was back of the way Darrow blew up. I did hear about it, you see."

"I don't believe it," said Fargo. "All he was thinking about was doing his job. He's all right, anyway; I'm strong for him."

Murray was the only man of them all who had much to say. Darrow did try to apologize for his outburst, but Fargo stopped him. But, though little was said, Fargo understood that he had bridged a certain gap and had in some way won admission to the inner circle. He saw less, now, of Blaine and Coffin, and his working knowledge of the *Bugle* was acquired from the rank and file. He began to think seriously of settling down to hard work. Blaine, in the natural course of events, would retire before long, and Fargo saw no reason why he should not take his place. He broached the idea to Murray and found that the managing editor was enthusiastic.

"Best thing in the world!" he said heartily. "The old chief's a corker, but he's never able to forget that it's another man's money he's spending. This town is growing, and so is the whole State. The *Bugle's* got to grow with them, and you're the man to see that it does."

Janet Spencer, too, approved, when he told her what he thought of doing. He had developed a habit, by this time, of taking his problems to her. They had long rides in the open country in his roadster, and he spent a good many quiet evenings with her.

"It's what you need, John," she said. "It's what you've needed for a long time. Uncle Henry was right, you know. You're not the sort to make a country house and a golf links your principal interests."

He winced a little at the mention of Spencer's name. And that was because, with the best will in the world, he couldn't keep his hatred of Spencer up to concert pitch. The crowding of other interests in his mind had something to do with that; Spencer himself had more. For Spencer looked on with a kindly and benevolent interest as the friendship between Fargo and Janet developed, and he went out of his way to be pleasant to Fargo when he found him in the house, as he so often did.

For some time Fargo had not thought about the plan that had led him to make his first visit to the *Bugle* office; he knew now that he could never put that plan into execution. He was too fond of Janet, for one thing, to be willing to hurt her uncle. And he had heard things casually, from Murray and the others, that had made him see the unworthiness of his project. Yet the idea of giving up his revenge rankled. There were times when he stayed away from Janet because of some revival in his mind of the old bitterness.

But those times came at intervals that constantly grew longer, and Fargo was beginning to be reconciled to the thought of foregoing his revenge when something occurred that changed the whole aspect of things in the most radical way.

CHAPTER VI.

Despite his growing knowledge of newspaper work, Fargo was still ignorant of many things. It was news that chiefly interested him; his understanding of the business management of the *Bugle* was vague in the extreme. And it was with a half-formed idea of getting into closer touch with that side of the paper that he took to dropping into Blaine's office from time to time. It was during one of these visits that Coffin came in and, at the sight of Fargo, paused in the door.

"Go ahead, Coffin," said Fargo. "I'm just taking up Mr. Blaine's time."

"It's the sprinkler ordinance, Mr. Blaine," said Coffin, coming in. "We've been backing it pretty hard. Gormley is against it, naturally; so are most of the real-estate and manufacturing interests. But they're afraid to come out in the open; they don't want to take a chance on making an open fight against an ordinance that makes for greater safety of working conditions."

Blaine nodded.

"Well?" he said.

"I heard from Burlington this morning," Coffin said. "I've been expecting to see him for two weeks. They want all publicity dropped. The ordinance can be killed in committee if public sentiment isn't aroused. If we keep on with our fight, the committee will report it out, and Gormley doesn't want to have to beat it in councils, though he's got the votes, of course. We'll drop it, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," agreed Blaine, with a faint sigh.

Fargo, startled, a good deal puzzled, saw that the lines in his face had deepened, somehow, and that his eyes were those of a tired old man.

"Will you speak to Murray?" asked Coffin.

"Yes—yes," said Blaine. "Anything else, Coffin?"

"Just a minute!" said Fargo. "I wish you'd explain this. Who is Burlington? And how is it that he can tell us what to do about an ordinance we've been supporting because the public safety requires it? I know something about that. Murray's told me."

Coffin and Blaine exchanged swift glances. Coffin's cynicism, never entirely hidden, was very close to the surface now. But Blaine spoke without meeting Fargo's eyes.

"Burlington is advertising manager for Spencer, John," he said. "And in-

directly he can dictate the placing of a lot more advertising. Spencer's store is our biggest advertiser. If we want to keep that contract, we can't offend the people who place it."

"Oh!" said Fargo. Hot words were on his tongue, but he caught himself, for the moment. "Isn't this pretty close to bribery and corruption?" he asked.

"Not at all, Mr. Fargo," said Coffin quietly. His eyes were on Fargo while he spoke; a faint, cynical smile played about his lips. "It's simply business. We and our advertisers have a community of interest. Our prosperity depends upon theirs. Naturally, we defer to their judgment as to what measures threaten their well-being."

Again Fargo restrained his impulse to savage speech. He understood perfectly the veiled sneer in Coffin's tone.

"That's very pretty," he said. "But who is really the judge as to whether the threat you speak of is genuine? If you run your paper on those lines, aren't you, in effect, considering only your own interests?"

"I'll have to answer your question with another," said Coffin. "Am I to consider this question as one of ethics or one of business? Frankly, I've never understood that I was to apply an ethical test to a matter of this sort. As I've seen it, I'm employed here to promote your interests—to make money for you."

Fargo glanced at Blaine, who nodded.

"That's so, John," he said. "Coffin's using just about the words I'd have used."

"Maybe I've been wrong," said Fargo slowly, picking his words carefully, "but it's always seemed to me that a newspaper is a public institution. Doesn't it derive all its value from its readers? Doesn't it, for that reason, owe its first duty to them? Doesn't it get advertising because of its circulation?"

"This isn't the millennium!" said Coffin suddenly. For the first time he stopped sneering. "You don't suppose newspapers like to deal with advertisers behind their readers' backs, do you? But the readers don't pay their way. It's the advertising that keeps this paper and every other paper going—"

"No!" snapped Fargo. "You're wrong there, Mr. Coffin! It's the readers. Because it's they who make the advertising. It doesn't matter whether they pay directly or indirectly—it's they who pay, in the long run!"

"Hold on, John!" said Blaine. "You're letting yourself be carried away by an impulse. Coffin's right. We're not living in the millennium. Your theory is good, but Coffin has practice on his side. You don't understand."

"Maybe not," said Fargo. Blaine, looking at him, was startled. For the first time he saw about John Fargo's mouth, in the grim set of his jaw, in the flash of his eyes, things that reminded him of the old fighting days of Henry Fargo. "Maybe not. But—we'll see what we can do. To begin with, we'll continue our fight for this sprinkler ordinance. If this man Burlington says anything more, Coffin, you can explain as much or as little as you like."

"John—don't be rash!" Blaine pleaded. "You're going to run your head into a stone wall."

"A stone wall! I think so, too," echoed Coffin. "Look out of the window, there, Mr. Fargo. A stone wall like the one on the outside of Spencer's big store over there."

He pointed to the graystone building over which flew a white flag on which was inscribed, in great letters of blue, the one word: "Spencer's."

"Spencer!" said Fargo, drawing in his breath. "My soul! That was all you needed to say to settle it! Spencer! He be damned!"

CHAPTER VII.

Even then, perhaps, there might have been a chance to avert the fight that Fargo seemed determined to precipitate. But two things served to sharpen Fargo's appetite for trouble. The first, certainly, was that here he saw a legitimate, fair opening for an attack on the man who had injured him; and the second was the enthusiasm with which Murray and every other man on the *Bugle* who heard of what was to be done greeted the news.

It was that enthusiasm that swept Fargo and the *Bugle* almost from the beginning into a fight far bigger than Fargo had dreamed of. His first thought had been to rebuke Spencer for thinking that he, through his advertising patronage, could control the *Bugle*. But he could not stop there. He found that he was tilting at a system that had grown up and become a part of the natural order of things in Grantham. Lined up against him he saw not only Spencer, but the greater part of the solid business interests of the town.

And he began to have a glimpse, before many days, of how great a task it was that he had set himself. He saw the alliance of business and politics—politics as represented by Gormley.

"I don't blame Spencer and the rest so much," said Murray. "They've been acting in self-defense. Gormley's had the power. He's put one ordinance after another on the books that were never meant to be enforced. And he's used them, and the threat of enforcing them, to keep the business men in line. If half the deadwood among the ordinances were brought to life, no business at all could be done in this town. And Spencer and the rest of them have paid for protection."

"You can say it's shortsighted—and it is. But who was to start the fight? These fellows took the easiest way, and they've let the system grow and grow

until it looks impossible to beat it. Now—you're planning to make the fight. You've got to know one thing, though—even the men you'll help the most by winning will be against you. They'll line up with Gormley, because, at first, Gormley can hurt them worse than you can. If the *Bugle* goes into this fight, it's got to fight Gormley from the start. And it can't pick and choose. It's got to hit every head that's in the way."

"That's what I want—"

"All right. But count the cost. Our advertising is going to be shot to pieces. If we can beat Gormley in the next city election, if we can elect an independent candidate as mayor—we'll get it all back. If we can hold on until the tide turns, you'll make more money than any one ever dreamed was to be made with this paper. But—can you stand the loss?"

"I don't know," said Fargo slowly. "If what you say is so, there's no way to figure out that loss in advance, is there? But I can tell you this, Murray: The *Bugle's* mine, without encumbrance, except for the few shares of stock Blaine holds. And I'll liquidate everything else I hold and throw it all into this fight, if I must."

"Glory!" said Murray. "That's about as complete an answer as you could give, Fargo. Well—I'll get to work. Got time to do a little planning with me now?"

Fargo flushed suddenly.

"I can't!" he said. "I've just remembered an engagement. But from this time I'll make no dates for business hours."

"Which will be about twenty-four hours a day, you'll find," said Murray.

Coffin had come up to them while they were speaking, and had been listening. He smiled faintly now as Fargo went off; and Murray, a speculative look in his eyes, turned to him.

"It's my business to be in touch with

town gossip," he said. "Do you suppose that date of his is with—"

"There're a lot of things he hasn't thought of yet," answered Coffin, with seeming irrelevance.

But the irrelevance was only apparent. It was perfectly true that Fargo had not taken Janet Spencer into account as he had come to his swift decision. But now, as he drove swiftly to Spencer's house, he made up for that failure. The fight that he had undertaken was bound to complicate his relations with her. But on one point his mind was clear—he must tell her himself what he meant to do. It would not do to let her learn the truth from others.

They were to play golf that afternoon, and she was on the piazza, waiting for him, when he arrived.

"You're late," she said, "and that's something new for you."

"I'm sorry," he told her. "Janet—do you mind if we don't go out to the club? I want to talk."

She looked at him.

"All right," she said briefly. "Come into the library. It's not warm, and it's a good place to talk."

"I'm afraid there's going to be a row, Janet," he said.

"Oh!" she said, and he saw that she winced slightly. "You mean that you and my uncle—"

He nodded.

"I'm sorry," he said. "There's nothing personal about it this time, Janet. We're on different sides, that's all."

"Suppose you tell me," she said thoughtfully.

As well as he could, he did. But his explanation was lame; it seemed to him that he could not say all that was in his mind. He would not attack her uncle directly; he tried to give Spencer the benefit of the doubt at every point. And as he went on, Janet frowned.

"You're not telling me everything,"

she said sharply, once. "Why does my uncle oppose this ordinance?"

"You'd better ask him," said Fargo. "Look here, Janet—I'm trying not to impute motives to him in my own mind. I'm certainly not going to try to picture them for you."

"No," she said. "You're right, John. I'm glad you've told me as much as you have."

"I had to do that," he said. "And—Janet—is it going to make any difference."

Another girl might have pretended to misunderstand, but Janet did not. She met his eyes quite frankly.

"I don't know," she said carefully. "I don't see how I can tell you, John. I've got to stand by him, you know. If he's sore and bitter, I suppose you won't come here——"

"I've got to see you," he said simply. "Janet!"

Still her eyes met his. She smiled very faintly, but there was no mirth in her eyes.

"Well, John?" she said. "Just what do you want?"

"You!" he blurted out, before he could weigh his words and think of all the reasons for being reticent just then. "Don't you know it, Janet? I don't know how long I've loved you——"

She put out her hand and touched his for a moment.

"I'm glad," she said simply. But then, when he moved toward her, she checked him. "No," she said: "I don't mean that, John. But—I'm glad that's the way you care. I think I've been hoping for a long time that you would. If this trouble weren't before us—oh—I don't know! And when it's over—But now now."

"Janet!" he said. "If you can tell me that, what can anything else matter? We can't let anything interfere."

"No," she said. "That's true. But you've got to see my side of this, John. I've come to know you pretty well.

You've been one sort of man, and now you're going to be an entirely different sort. I don't know anything about the man you'll be after this fight. I hope I'm going to care even more for him than I do for you, but——"

"You're not fair, Janet," he said sullenly. "If you love me——"

"Won't you see?" she said. "If this fight is going to be as great a thing as you believe, winning it or losing it is going to make you over. There's that. And then—suppose you and I were—engaged. Wouldn't your hands be tied? Could you go on fighting the man who is everything to me? Wouldn't your whole fight lose its significance? You might spare him, and he might spare you. Either way, you wouldn't have had it out."

"It wouldn't make any difference!" he exclaimed. "I've told you that this fight is not personal."

"Every fight is personal," she said. "No, it won't do. I've told you more than I meant to."

Try as he would, he could not move her. And something was lacking in his plea, urgent as it was. For he knew, deep down within him, that she was right. If she had yielded to him, his fight would have become impossible.

"Cheer up," she said, when it was time for him to go. "You won't want to come here. But you can call me up when you want to talk to me. And I'd like to be taken for a ride sometimes, I think. Only—you must promise not to talk to me about this fight. I want to be outside of that. I'm too fond of both of you to take sides."

CHAPTER VIII.

From the outset Fargo and the *Bugle* had to force the fighting. The *Bugle's* support of the sprinkler ordinance was not actively resented. No advertising was withdrawn, at least, in consequence of the vehemence of Murray's cam-

paign for the measure, despite the implicit threat from Burlington that had precipitated the whole fight.

"They're too keen to go for us on an issue where we're so absolutely in the right," was Murray's explanation of the failure of the opposition to strike. "They're waiting to see what we're going to do. Spencer and Gormley and the rest of them probably aren't really afraid of us. I mean, they think they can beat us if it comes to a fight. But they're not anxious to start anything. They know it will cost them a lot, one way and another, and, what's worse, that it will stir up a lot of muddy water they're not anxious for the people to see."

The situation was not without its temptations for Fargo. He might carry on his fight on the sprinkler measure and then shut his eyes to whatever else might remain to be done. He would have made good his threat; he would have refused to allow the *Bugle* to be bribed by advertising contracts. It was the thought of Janet that made him think along that line. But it was the thought of her, too, that stiffened his resolution to go on as he had begun.

"If they won't come after us, we'll smoke them out," he told Murray.

The sprinkler ordinance was beaten in councils, but only after an open fight. That much, and no more, the *Bugle* was able to accomplish. Gormley's power was too great to make any real movement of reform in the city government possible unless an election swept his crew out of power. And to do that, as Murray pointed out, would not be easy.

"Gormley's not so bad, you know," he said. "He's a pretty intelligent man, and he's always known just about how far he could go. He's kept the opposite party stifled, too. He's handed out jobs to the other organization, just to keep it from making too stiff a fight, and he's got the neatest bipartisan machine

I've ever seen in action. And still, in spite of that—Gormley's our target. We've got to put up a real candidate for mayor this fall, and we've got to elect him. Or else—we haven't got a chance."

"I don't see that," said Fargo. "It looks to me as if there wouldn't be much of a fight, after all."

"Wait and see," said Murray, with a chuckle. "They're just waiting for a good chance. They'll drop on us like a ton of brick when they see us doing something they think will give them an opening. By the way—do you own any G. E. L.?"

"Grantham Electric Lines?" asked Fargo. "I think so—yes."

"Better sell it. We're going after them. There's a fine sample of the pervasive way graft gets through a town. President Skinner, of the G. E. L., isn't a crook. He's simply a good business man. Yet this application for the franchises to cover the Eastern Addition looks to me as if it had been drawn by a burglar. The company gets everything—the city holds the bag. Skinner's looking for the best bargain he can get for his stockholders—including you. He thinks he can get it by 'seeing' Gormley. And there you are! You're a partner in that bit of looting yourself—if you hold your stock."

"I see," said Fargo. "This is a little more complicated than I thought it would be. But go ahead. I'll tell Bruce to get rid of the stock."

Murray worked up his campaign carefully; he timed the first of a series of sensational attacks upon G. E. L. and the city administration so that its appearance coincided with the company's application to councils for an extension of its franchises.

The move had one unforeseen outcome: Blaine, who had been shaking his head for weeks, threw up his hands and resigned.

"I've nothing to say," he told Fargo sadly. "You're setting out to ruin the paper that I've been building up for forty years. It's your own property, and it's your privilege to do as you like with your own, but I'm too old to stand by."

Fargo was genuinely distressed, but he saw no way of altering the old man's decision. He had a faint perception of the tragedy of the situation for Blaine, but he was too absorbed in the coming fight, too vitally interested in himself, to understand it fully. And he was too young to enter into Blaine's feelings; to understand the pain that comes to an old man who has to stand aside and let the younger generation take command.

If the *Bugle's* fight on the sprinkler ordinance had left Spencer and Gormley and their allies indifferent, the first attack on G. E. L. roused them. Spencer himself took the field. His advertising was instantly withdrawn, and practically every other big local advertiser followed his example. And in the *Globe*, Grantham's other morning paper, and the two evening sheets, there was printed a full-page announcement, signed by all of the *Bugle's* lost advertisers, attacking the *Bugle*. It read:

The undersigned feel it their duty to withhold their advertising support from a journal that has chosen to join the demagogic attack upon capital. The proprietor of the *Bugle* has appealed to class prejudice; in pretending to uphold the rights of the poorer citizens, he practically condemns the whole East Side to continue to walk to work, since no offer, other than that of the G. E. L., has been made to supply the necessary new trolley lines. The *Bugle*, in joining the hue and cry against capital, convicts itself of hypocrisy and stands revealed as a menace to the city.

"Whew!" said Murray. "Score one for Spencer, Gormley & Co. That's clever, Fargo! There is a stupid fight against the big railroads. They're trying to tar us with that brush. Well—in this case we can fight them with

facts and figures. But they're going to make trouble."

CHAPTER IX.

For a long time after that first smashing blow from the opposing faction, Fargo had to face a foe he could not reach. Blow after blow was dealt at him through the *Bugle*. Coffin, as he reported week after week with statements of constantly diminishing returns, was unfailingly cheerful.

"You discounted all this before you started your fight, I suppose," he said again and again, with that cynical smile always lurking about his lips.

But there were things that a man far more experienced than Fargo could not have discounted. He was amazed to discover how many ways there were in which the enemy could strike at his pocket, which was, of course, his one really vulnerable spot. The local telephone company, for example, an independent concern that had survived the era of consolidation, cut off the special rate the *Bugle* had always enjoyed. That was one item only, but it meant a doubled expense, and Bruce reported that, since the special rate had been a concession, there was no way in which the company could be legally compelled to give the *Bugle* the advantages its rivals continued to enjoy.

The paper situation was difficult, too; shipments to the *Bugle* were often unaccountably delayed. It was easy to suspect that the influence of important shippers like Spencer and some of his allies was responsible for this; it was just as impossible to prove it as to prove that other underhand blows were being directed at Fargo and his paper.

For the first time in his life, Fargo took money seriously. He had sold out most of the good securities he had possessed at the beginning of his fight; he had not supposed that it would be necessary to dispose of his real-estate hold-

ings, which were confined to Grantham and its suburbs and were fairly large. But as the *Bugle* grew more and more like a bottomless pit, and absorbed more and more of his cash capital, he told Bruce to put his property in the market.

"Especially that infernal country place!" he said, with a laugh. "It got me into this mess in the beginning, and it might as well do its share toward pulling me out."

"All right," said Bruce. He looked a little dubious, however. "You'd better give me a knock-down price."

"Oh, get what you can!" said Fargo. "Real estate is pretty lively just now, isn't it?"

"Ye-es," said Bruce.

But Fargo's real estate was not lively. It was the deadest thing in the world, as matters turned out. Bruce spent a week in investigation; then came into Fargo's office one morning with a grave face.

"Look here, John," he said. "I was nervous the other day when you told me to sell off your real-estate holdings. Since then, I've been verifying my suspicions. Your stuff's a drug on the market."

"Why?" asked Fargo, amazed. "There's land there that you used to get a lot of offers for. You always advised me to wait for a rise."

"Exactly. And the rise has begun to come. But your land won't sell—because it's yours. I guess word has gone out from Spencer, Gormley & Co. They've decided that your purse is running low, and they see another chance to squeeze you."

Fargo whistled, and began to cover his pad with penciled figures.

"Then I can't count on any money from that source?" he asked.

"No. That's why I'm telling you this now, although, of course, I haven't exhausted all the possible buyers yet, and I may strike some one who isn't taking orders. The trouble is that it's a local

market—there's no chance, I'm afraid, to interest outside investors, with conditions as they are just at present."

"Well—that's different." Fargo frowned and glanced down at the figures on his pad. "I'm glad you told me. I hoped I wouldn't need the money, but I wanted to have it in reserve. They're crowding us, Bruce."

"I was afraid they would," said the lawyer. "I've been talking to Murray. If what he says is right, it's all a question of beating Gormley in the election this year?"

Fargo nodded.

"Well—how are you going to do it? I suppose you figure on practically dictating the opposition candidate. Thought of any one yet?"

"We're waiting to see what Gormley does."

Bruce sat up.

"Don't you know?" he said. "Great Scott—do you mean to say I can come into a newspaper office and tell it the news? Gormley is going to try to steal your thunder. He's going to put up a business man's ticket—heeded by Spencer himself!"

Fargo's voice rose as he called through his open door. An office boy came over; a moment later Murray joined them, and whistled when he heard Bruce's news.

"You've got to get up pretty early to get breakfast ahead of Gormley!" he said. "They certainly pass the buck to us with that move!"

"Well?" said Bruce. "What'll you do now? Who'll be your candidate?"

"I'd thought of you," said Fargo.

But Bruce shook his head at once.

"No!" he said. "I've got no magnetism. The only voters I'd really appeal to are the ones who'd be lined up for Spencer in advance—the silk-stockings crowd. You want a man who can reach the common people and the labor element." Suddenly he brought down his hand on Fargo's desk. "Peter

Marsh!" he exclaimed. "He's your man!"

"Marsh?" said Fargo doubtfully. "Oh, yes! But he's an old crab——"

"Bruce is right!" cried Murray. "He's the very man—if we can get him. He's a manufacturer who's never had a day's trouble with his men. He rose from the machine shop himself, and he's always lived in the East End. I've heard him speak a few times, too, and I believe he'd make a good campaigner."

"And I happen to know that there's bad blood between him and Spencer, too," said Bruce. "I think you can get him, John, if you handle him properly."

"How about the nomination?" asked Fargo.

"That'll be easy," said Bruce. "I can help you there. If you keep your plans quiet, there'll be no fight in the primary—every one will expect the nomination to go begging, as it usually does. Call that my contribution. I'm no politician, but I've kept my eyes open and I know the ropes."

CHAPTER X.

Marsh, a man well along in the fifties, proved balky and suspicious when Fargo and Bruce approached him. But he was willing to listen to them; on the distinct understanding that he should not be asked to make any campaign contribution, he finally consented to allow the use of his name.

"But make no mistake about that, gentlemen," he said. "I'll not put up a penny. If you nominate me, I'll run. But I'll say what I please in my speeches, and I'll take no dictation from any newspaper."

"He'll be enthusiastic when the campaign is on," said Bruce. "I know Marsh. He's always afraid some one will find him out and expose him for the soft-hearted old sentimentalist he is. If he ever gets interested in the

fight, there's no telling what he may do."

But the accession of Marsh, such as it was, was not enough to offset Fargo's other troubles. Unforeseen items of expense turned up with appalling regularity; accidents in the mechanical departments of the paper, involving the purchase of new machinery, ate into Fargo's bank account, and his reserve fund grew smaller every week. The advertising revenue of the paper had dropped to an infinitesimal figure, and now a new blow from Gormley nearly wiped it out altogether.

For some time Fargo had been counting upon the city advertising, prescribed by law. Around election time this would be an important item, beginning with the notices concerning the primaries. The law required this advertising to be printed in three Grantham newspapers, and both the *Bugle* and the *Globe* had carried it for years, while alternate years had seen each of the two evening papers favored. This year the *Bugle* was left out entirely; the advertising was published in both the evening sheets—and, of course, in the *Globe*, which was an active supporter of Spencer's candidacy for mayor and had been the organ of Gormley's party since its establishment.

"I might have foreseen that," said Fargo grimly. "But I didn't!"

"Neither did I," said Murray, "but they haven't overlooked a bet yet. Well—it gives me a chance to say something I've been thinking. I've spotted a way to save some money."

"It can't be done!" said Fargo, with a feeble grin. "I've lain awake too many nights watching sets of performing figures to believe that."

"You're wrong," said Murray. "Salaries——"

"Nothing doing!" said Fargo, with a bright spot of color showing on each cheek bone. "It's bad enough not to be able to raise you fellows——"

"I guess I'm still managing editor of this sheet, even if the owner does butt in a lot!" interrupted Murray. "And salaries are in my department. I've cut my own in half, and—well, we had a sort of meeting the other morning, after you'd gone home, and all the boys figured out a sort of minimum living wage. Some of them are married and can't stand much of a cut, but we've all come down a bit."

Fargo turned away for a moment. And when he faced Murray again, his eyes were rather dim.

"There's not much I can say after that, is there?" he said huskily. "I can't refuse—"

"Oh, thunder!" said Murray. "We all want to do our bit. Call it plain, ordinary foresight, if you like. We figured we'd be pretty sure of life jobs after—"

"Yes—I know all about that!" said Fargo. "I got a chance to see what a lot of bootlickers you all were when I first started in hanging around the shop!"

"Well, forget it, anyhow," said Murray. "Except that you've got that much more to figure on."

There were other ways of reducing expenses, too. Fargo discovered them all. He stopped buying clothes, and he sold his roadster. His clubs accepted his resignation, and he let the servants in his house go and took to making his own bed and eating his meals in cheap restaurants. It wasn't comfortable, but he had too much to do to dwell very often on such minor troubles.

Infinitely more disturbing was the way in which Janet Spencer had slipped out of his life. She had been away a good deal, and even after she returned, he found it hard to bring himself to telephone to her. The opposition hadn't confined its attacks to his paper, by any means; a good many ugly things had been printed or circulated by word of mouth about Fargo himself. He didn't

know whether Janet would believe them or not, and it seemed to him that it would not be quite the thing to ask her.

He had to make his fight alone. If he won, he could go to her. If he lost—well, nothing would matter much then. So he was content with the occasional glimpses he caught of her in the streets. And at night, often, when he was tired out, he sat in his room and stared at the photograph she had given him. He would have rated that picture highly in any appraisal of his assets he might have made at that time.

CHAPTER XI.

Marsh's nomination was secured, thanks to Bruce's efforts, but the necessity for keeping dark the plan to make him a candidate had given the other side a big start. The voters had had more time to get used to Spencer; before the nomination of Marsh made it plain that there was to be a real fight, they had already begun to regard Spencer's election as a foregone conclusion. And from the outset it was only too plain that the fight for Marsh would be an uphill one, and that it must be waged against heavy odds.

With those who had been in touch with him, Marsh was popular, but Spencer was popular, too. And he appealed to a wider circle than did Marsh. He was more picturesque. Fargo, flinging himself into the fight, did not lose hope, but he was not able to cherish illusions. He knew, too, how desperately close to the wind he was sailing in a financial way, and he was unable, try as he would, to reduce the staggering deficit that appeared in each week's balance sheet.

Coffin, assailed by Murray, only smiled.

"I'm doing the best I can," he said. "And—I've drawn no salary at all for six weeks, Murray."

"Oh, we know you're really with us.

Coffin," said Fargo. "But—you're so infernally calm about it!"

"I can't help that!" said Coffin, with a flash of temper. "I'm not emotional, and never was. I've got to take things as they come. If I had a brain storm every day the way Murray does, things would be in a worse mess than they are now."

"I suppose he's right," Murray admitted. "But I hate a clam! Always did!"

Then, when Fargo's finances were at their lowest ebb, Bruce burst into his office with the news of a miracle.

"I've sold one of your white elephants!" he cried. "The country place is gone!"

"How much?" asked Fargo instantly.

"The full price!" Bruce cried. "I'd swear there was something fishy—except that I've got a certified check for the purchase price. I don't know who the buyer is. The deal was closed through some Chicago lawyers. But I suspect some one in the Gormley-Spencer ring saw a chance for a bargain and wanted to snatch it without letting them know. Anyhow, we needn't worry about the secrecy—as long as you get the money!"

"I should say not!" cried Fargo exultingly. "That's the greatest thing you could have told me, Bruce! That'll pull us through! Here—I've got to tell Murray!"

Murray rejoiced with him, but only for a moment.

"That's all right as far as it goes," he said. "But—if we lose this election, you're no better off. It'll only mean a postponement of the smash. If we win—well, we'll be all right. You'll see the rats scuttling out of the Gormley-Spencer ship as fast as they can. If Marsh is elected, we can name our own terms—but if he isn't!"

"I know," said Fargo soberly. "Bob—just how good a chance is there to beat Spencer?"

"If the election were held to-morrow, we'd be snowed under," said Murray quietly. "There's no use in fooling ourselves, John. The trouble is we've got nothing that amounts to anything against Spencer. We can attack Gormley—but who'll believe that Spencer will take orders from Gormley? He's pretty nearly impregnable."

"Then you figure that we're licked?"

"Not till the last vote's counted in the last precinct on election night! No! I've got one card up my sleeve. I don't know whether it's high enough to take the trick or not. But I'm betting on something that's never failed me yet."

He would not explain himself. A few days later, he opened a letter while Fargo was in his room, and Fargo saw the look of triumph that came, for a moment, into his eyes. But even then he would not tell Fargo what was in his mind.

"I'm afraid to hoodoo it!" he said. "If it comes through, we'll have them on toast! But I've seen too many good things go wrong."

So the days wore on until the last week before election came. And then, on Friday evening, with election coming on the following Tuesday, Murray, his eyes shining with triumph, came into Fargo's room, a bundle of proofs in his hand. He slapped them down on the desk.

"There you are!" he cried exultingly. "There's your leading business man and eminent citizen! That story would damn the Angel Gabriel—let alone Henry Spencer!"

Swiftly Fargo's eyes ran down the smudged proofs. There, before him, lay just such a story as he had dreamed of raking up against Spencer to give him his revenge for the dyed waters of his country place and the joke that had made him the laughingstock of the town.

"No wonder Spencer changed his name and came to a town where he

wasn't known, to get a fresh start!" cried Murray, in uncontrollable excitement. "Oh, he was clear enough legally—but what will people say about a man who played a trick like that?"

Slowly Fargo took it in. He read the sordid, ugly details of Spencer's betrayal, years before, of a man who had trusted him. The man had been his partner, in a small Eastern city, in a dry-goods store. He had left everything to Spencer; he had signed documents without looking at them; and when the crash had come, he had been ruined. For he had been rendered liable, through Spencer's trickery, for all the debts of the firm. Murray fairly danced about while Fargo read the story. Coffin came in, smiling wearily. Murray cried out to him.

"I got it!" he cried. "Breen got the stuff, Coffin!"

And then he saw Fargo's face, as the owner of the *Bugle* turned to meet his eyes.

"John!" he cried. "What's the matter? Don't you see?" And then: "John! You—you're not going to let any notion of chivalry keep you from using this story? Can't you see that it's the only chance we've got?"

"Hold on, Bob," said Fargo. "You don't quite understand. There's something I can't explain." He was thinking of that unworthy design of his, abandoned and forgotten so long ago. "I want to wait. I've got to think this out. It'll do no harm to wait twenty-four hours."

"John!" cried Murray. He looked worn out suddenly; all the strain of the fight showed in his bearing.

"Oh, shut up, Murray!" said Coffin. "Give Fargo time to get used to the idea. Your story will be used all right. You've got to give him time to see that it's our one chance."

"Perhaps you're right, Coffin," said Fargo evenly. "At any rate, I'm going to think it over."

And without heeding Murray's pleading appeal, he walked out of the office and into the cool November night. He faced a crisis, and he had to be alone for the battle with himself that he had to fight.

And yet, from the first, it seemed to him that there could be only one issue—the Buckley story must be killed. Every instinct, every feeling, dictated that. And yet, could he betray Murray and Coffin and the rest who had worked so hard for him, even for Janet's sake? Could he set his own honor against all that they had at stake?

More even than these things was involved. He was sure of this—if he printed that attack on Henry Spencer, he would place a barrier between Janet and himself that could never be crossed. More and more, as he walked toward his house, the thought of Janet dominated him. He could not use her so; no matter how badly he had to treat Murray and the others who had staked so much upon him, he could not give her up.

And yet—how could he give them up, either? A dozen times he came to a decision; a dozen times he reopened the whole struggle. And then, as he turned the corner and came up to his house, he started. By the curb stood Janet's little electric car, facing him. And as he stopped, rooted to the pavement in his astonishment, Janet herself stepped out and came toward him.

"John!" she cried softly. "Oh, John! I thought you would never come!"

"Janet!" he said dully. And then, somehow, she was in his arms, sobbing his name again and again.

CHAPTER XII.

For a moment desire mastered Fargo, and he forgot everything in the delight of holding her so. But at her first faint hint of a wish to free herself, he let her go and drew back.

"Janet," he said, "why did you come? Oh, my dear—"

"I had to!" she cried. "Do you think I haven't seen you all these weeks and days? Do you think I haven't known what you were going through? And—the time came to-night when I couldn't stay away from you any longer! I had to come! I couldn't let you go on thinking I didn't care—that perhaps I believed the things they were saying about you!"

"Ah!" he said. He threw his head back and laughed. "Janet—you don't know what you've done for me! Oh, my dear—how I've longed for you in these weeks when I knew I mustn't go to you! I'll never forget this moment, Janet—no matter what happens! You know—it may go either way. I may be beaten. But—now that I've got this to remember, I don't care!"

She was silent for a moment.

"Jack," she said then softly, "I want you to have even more than my coming to remember. Dear—I want you to marry me. Now—to-night—this minute!"

"Janet!" he cried. "You're mad! You don't know what you're saying!"

"I do!" she cried desperately. "I do! I've got to help, and there's no other way! I've got to have the right to stand beside you and share whatever comes to you. Oh, Jack—I'm right! There are reasons that I can't tell you, even now! You've got to let me have my way!"

He fought as well as he could. But even had he been in a normal state, she would probably have won him over. And his state was not normal. He was exhausted; the sudden crisis that Murray's story had produced, coming on top of the weeks of strain and uphill fighting, had depleted his last reserve of nervous energy. He pleaded with her; he made the point that until his fight was won, he had no right to take a wife. But she took the words from

his mouth, and there was magnificence in the way she swept that argument of pride away.

"I'm not afraid!" she said. "I'm not afraid to face life with you! Jack—down in your heart are you afraid you can't take care of me?"

"By God, no!" he cried, catching her in his arms again. Primitive things were in his snarling voice; it was the male in him that spoke, the instinct of his sex.

"Ah!" she said, with a little sigh of infinite content in her victory. "Then we can stop talking, can't we? Jack—I'm not going to get in your way. I'm going home as soon—as soon as we've been married. And I'll wait there until you've done your work and can come to take me."

Even then he protested. He cited the hour, the need of a license and of finding a minister. She looked at him scornfully. But, even so, it was very late before everything was ready, and they drove, in Janet's little car, to the house of the old minister who had known Janet since her childhood and had adored and spoiled her always. And the moment that they saw him, standing in his open door, all sense of the grotesqueness, of the absurdity, of the proceeding fell from Fargo, and he was awed, as he understood suddenly how solemn, how momentous, a thing it was that they were doing. The old man took Janet's hand and stood a moment looking at her.

"You must be married so?" he said slowly. "Janet—can you assure me that there is a good reason? You needn't tell me what it is—only that it exists."

"Oh, there is—there is!" said Janet.

He bowed his head. He had roused two of his servants, who stood as witnesses, blinking, longing to get back to bed, while the old man read the marriage service and Fargo and Janet made their responses. It seemed to Fargo

that he must be dreaming. But the sight of Janet, her eyes like stars, and the sound of her voice, so cool and sure—oh, so sure!—sustained him and made him realize that it was no dream. And then, at last, they rose from their knees, and for a moment she clung to him, trembling.

"Oh, Janet!" he said. "I hope that you'll never be sorry!"

"I never shall!" she cried, with a fierce little catch of her breath. "I've never been so sure of anything in all my life as I am that we have done the right thing to-night!"

They went out together into the night. In the east was the first hint of the coming dawn; just a lightening of the darkness that was ever so faintly perceptible to them. An odd constraint was upon them as Fargo held open the door of the little car.

"In with you, Janet!" he said. "I'll drive you home. It's cold."

"Home!" she said, with an uncertain laugh. "How funny! It isn't my home any more, is it? Thy house shall be my house—" Jack—I'm going to tell Uncle Henry as soon as I see him."

"Yes," he said quietly. "You must do that."

Janet lay back, wan and pale, her eyes closed, as he drove. He saw, with an overwhelming welling up of tenderness for her, how tired she was, how great had been the strain of the night. What a night! As wild, as strange, as this girl, suddenly become a woman, who had given herself to him—had forced him, indeed, to take her against his will. Suddenly he thought of the problem with which he had been struggling when she had come to him, and he laughed. She had solved it for him! Rightly or wrongly, she had banished his doubts. There could be no question now of what he had to do.

He turned into the driveway that led to Spencer's garage. The width of the garden lay between them and the

darkened house, a hundred feet away. Janet stirred wearily as the car stopped.

"Leave the car here," she said. "They'll attend to it later. It's nearly morning now, isn't it?"

He got out and stood holding his hand out to her, to help her down. As she rose, she stumbled slightly; her hand bag fell from her hand and flew open, and a sheaf of papers dropped from it. Fargo, stooping to recover them and hand them to her, saw them as they lay in the light of an electric bulb within the car. For a moment he could not believe his eyes—and then he was sure. They were the same proofs that Murray had shown him!

"Janet!" he cried. "So—you knew—you knew——"

He heard her stifled cry; he saw the fear in her eyes.

"Jack!" she cried. "Let me explain to you——"

"Explain!" he said. He laughed harshly. "I'm not quite a fool! You knew! You couldn't trust me! And that was why! Oh—my God!"

She shrank from him as if he had struck her. And then she slipped past him suddenly and ran to the house, ran like a hunted animal. For a moment he hesitated; then, instead of following her, he turned and strode toward the street. Once on the sidewalk, he walked on blindly, his head down, neither knowing nor caring that he was walking away from his house and toward the center of the city.

And then the silence of the early morning was shattered by a sudden clamor. He knew it at once for the tocsin, the fire bell to which Grantham still clung, even though it possessed a modern fire-alarm system. He looked up instinctively, and saw a faint red glow which grew deeper and more ominous as he looked, lighting the sky over the very heart of the city. As instinctively as he had looked up, he began

to run, slowly and clumsily, toward the fire.

Somehow he knew, long before he turned into Fargo Street, what he would see. It was without shock, without surprise, that he saw red flames leaping from the windows of the *Bugle* building. And, now that he knew, he checked his pace and walked slowly on, watching the spread of the fire and the coming of the firemen to cope with their hopeless task, with an interest as detached as that of any idle spectator. Men and boys ran past him; he never quickened his pace.

When he reached the crowd that the police held in check, he was recognized, and there were murmurs of sympathy on all sides as the crowd opened to make way for him. The police let him through the line, and he stopped near a hydrant, and so near to the fire that the heat of it scorched his cheeks. He looked on dully, apathetically. And then Murray came up to him, his face streaked with grime, unashamed of the tears that ran down his cheeks.

"The cowards!" he cried again and again. "The cowards!"

Old Stacy, the pressroom foreman, his face working, came up to them. He echoed Murray's cry.

"It was an explosion started it!" he said. "Down among my presses, it was. They're all gone! It's ruined we are!"

"Ruined!" said Murray. "You're right, Stacy! They've beaten us, John!"

"No!" shouted Fargo. At the word he seemed to come out of his trance. A demon of cold rage expelled the indifference with which he had watched the fire. "Murray—get the staff together! There's a vacant building of mine two blocks away—Bruce knows about it. Get everything you can here and get ready to get out a Sunday paper! We've paper in the freight yards—get it out if you have to use force! Scare up some ink somehow!"

"Stacy, keep in touch with Murray,

and have your men ready. Tell them their jobs go on as if nothing had happened! Get every mechanic you can lay your hands on and hold them in readiness to do an emergency job in installing new presses in that building. Tear out the doors and partitions—wreck the place, if you have to. Tell Chamberlain to get hold of linotypes in the job-printing places—or arrange to have our composition done there. Murray—you'll hear from me before ten o'clock—keep in touch with a phone. Have one rushed into the new building as soon as the company starts work for the day."

They stared at him as if he had gone mad. Their eyes mirrored the same thought. It seemed to them that this crowning disaster had unbalanced him. And they did not even guess his greatest trouble!

"John!" said Murray. "Old man—we're done! Don't take it so hard! We can't get new presses nearer than Chicago—and the other papers here won't help us—with things as they are."

"That's all you know!" said Fargo grittily. "You think I'm crazy, don't you? Perhaps I ought to be—though you don't know why. But I'm not! I know just what I'm going to do! As for you—get busy while I'm gone! Turn the whole staff loose on this fire. Find out who started it—so that you can *prove* it!"

"Where are you going?" asked Murray.

His tone had changed; he had caught himself. And he had responded to the confidence in Fargo's manner; he had got back his courage.

"I've got to get the limited," said Fargo. "No time to talk now! Oh—find Bruce and bring him to me. I need some papers from his safe! Lucky they were there, too, instead of in the office!"

He stood staring at the wrecked

building. Its ruin was utter and complete. And not for a moment did he doubt that this was the work of the enemy. They had meant to eliminate the *Bugle* from the fight. With the *Bugle* out, unable to deliver, in the last three days of the campaign, the smashing blows that might even now turn defeat into victory, the result of the election might be forecast. He wondered if they had heard of Murray's story—of the story that would have ruined Spencer's chance. Then a hand fell on his shoulder and he turned to face old Marsh. Marsh had been distant, suspicious, balky, all through the campaign. But now his emotion was plain.

"My dear boy!" he said. "They've crowded me, too, but I can still raise a few thousands, and it's all at your service, if there's any way for you to fight on—"

"Thanks!" said Fargo crisply. "I may take you up. But don't talk as if this meant defeat. I feel like Paul Jones. I think I'm just going to begin fighting!"

Marsh stared at him a moment; then he laughed. And now Bruce came up, and Fargo waved away all talk of sympathy.

"No time for that!" he snapped. "Bruce—get me the insurance policies on the *Bugle* building and contents, and the title deeds to all the real property I own. I haven't time to explain—I've got to make the limited!"

Ten minutes later, carrying a brief case that Bruce had thrust into his hands, he was aboard the train.

And at last he had time to think of Janet and the deadly blow that she had dealt him. For a moment he sat still, his head bowed in his hands. But then he stirred himself and began to plan. He was almost grateful for the fire. He could not brood upon that tragic, shocking discovery that he had made; he could not dwell upon the nightmare of Janet's betrayal. Sheer physical ex-

haustion sent him into a doze. He roused himself, three hours later, as the train slipped through endless yards in the outskirts of the great city that was his destination. He yawned and stretched frankly.

"Ah!" he said.

His muscles grew taut. He felt as he had, years before, when he had heard his signal called as he had crouched behind the line, knowing that in a moment the ball would come to him and that he must fight for the distance that was needed.

CHAPTER XIII.

When he stepped from the train, Fargo was conscious, for the first time, of his hunger. There was time for breakfast and for things more important than food. He threw off the habits of economy that the last few weeks had formed in him, drove in a taxicab to the nearest big hotel, and stopped, on the way, to buy new linen—a complete outfit, so that only his outer suit need remain unchanged. He got a room and a shower at the hotel—though he planned to be on his way back to Grantham before noon. He ordered breakfast to be sent to his room, and, after he had sent his suit to be pressed, reveled in a cold shower. Then he ate an astonishing breakfast and, when his clothes came, went to the hotel barber and let him do his worst.

There was nothing of the loser about Fargo when he left the hotel and walked toward an office building a few blocks away. He looked clean, fresh, unconquered, and unconquerable. He had an impression to make, and he knew the way to make it. And it was still early, despite all he had done; he had even to wait a few minutes for the man he wanted to see. But his wait was brief, and when his man came in, he stared at Fargo as if he were seeing a ghost.

"Fargo!" he said. "I've just heard about—"

And then a sudden suspicion that Fargo might have been away from Grantham, and that he would be breaking bad news, checked him. Fargo understood and grinned.

"It's all right, Sterling," he said. "I saw the fire. And I jumped the first train to come here and talk business to you."

Sterling sat down heavily in his chair. He seemed to be bewildered.

"Fargo—I can't tell you how sorry I am!" he said. "I wish I could help you. But I don't see what I can do now—"

"I'm here to show you," said Fargo. "You can guess I didn't run over just to pass the time of day! Now—I want some quick action, Sterling. You people have just installed new presses for the *Grantham Herald*—an evening paper. You've taken their old presses in part payment, and they're at Grantham now, waiting for freight cars to carry them to Chicago. You'll sell them from there. Sterling—I want to take them off your hands—to-day!"

"Good Lord!" said Sterling. "I never thought of that!" But his face fell suddenly. "Fargo—I hate to say it—but how can you pay for them? You know, I'm only manager here. It's not as if I were in business for myself. I could take a chance then that I couldn't take for the company."

"Here!" said Fargo. "Look at this stuff! I've got these insurance policies, and deeds for enough real estate in and around Grantham to pay for your presses three or four times over. I haven't been able to sell it, because they've been figuring on a chance to buy it in cheap after I went broke. But it's all the security you need."

He saw that Sterling was wavering.

"Stars above!" he cried. "I thought you were a business man, Sterling! You've got to sell those presses some-

where! And you'll never get a chance to stick a buyer as you can stick me to-day! The *Herald*'s old flat-bed press is worth more to me in Grantham to-day than your latest rotary delivered in sixty days!"

"I don't know—" Sterling still hesitated. He knew something of the fight against Fargo; he was not sure whether his superiors would care to earn the ill will of Fargo's enemies, and—he was not used to shouldering responsibility. "I'll wire New York," he said. "You can have an answer by Monday. That's forty-eight hours. You can't look for any quicker action than that."

"Forty-eight hours!" scoffed Fargo. "I want action in forty-eight seconds, Sterling!"

He was overwhelming Sterling now by the sheer force of his personality. Sterling wavered again—and was lost.

"Suppose I did it—how could you get delivery to-day?" he asked.

"Telephone!" snapped Fargo. "Cancel your shipping instructions and confirm by wire and letter. Send the letter by special messenger on the first train—which goes in fifteen minutes! My expense! Order delivery to my attorney, Bruce. Here—call your stenographer! And put in that long-distance call to the freight agent at Grantham!"

He took control of the whole office, from Sterling down. And then, when, despite Sterling's feeble protests, he had set the wheels in motion, he called Bruce from Sterling's desk and told him what he had done. He held the wire for twenty minutes, and talked to Murray as well as to Bruce.

"There's only one chance of a hitch now," he said. "I don't expect the railway people to recognize Sterling's telephonic orders, or even his wire. They may try to run those presses out before Sterling's letter gets in. But I've started it. Have some one waiting to meet the

messenger at the train. I think they'll be fooled by that—they'll be expecting it by mail. But if they try to kidnap those presses, stop them with an injunction or a gun—I don't care which!"

When he hung up, it seemed to him that, for the moment, he had done all he could. He wilted a little as he faced Sterling.

"You—you're a blasted anarchist or a superman or something!" said Sterling. "You hornswoggled me! I don't know yet what I've done—and I'll probably be fired for letting you make me do it! How did you get away with it?"

"Because I had to," said Fargo. "Well—so long, Sterling. I'm much obliged."

"He's—'much obliged!'" said Sterling, with a profane emphasis. "What are you going to do next? Rob a bank? Spare the Third National! That's where I keep my account."

Fargo tried to grin. But he was suffering from the reaction that had followed his success and he was beginning to be afflicted again by the thought of Janet, which had mercifully been dulled while he had been in full cry.

"Oh, I'm tame enough now!" he said. "I've been fed, you see. And I've got to hustle back. We've got to get out a paper to-morrow morning."

He left Sterling, a voluble man, utterly bereft of words.

CHAPTER XIV.

He thought of little but Janet as a fast train carried him back to Grantham. He was no longer angry, as he had been in the moment of his discovery. And, despite everything, despite the conviction that reason enforced, he felt that she could explain; that there was some hidden motive that would justify her. He felt this; it was purely emotional, and when he permitted himself to reason, to apply the principles of logic, his anger welled up

in him again. He was beset, in the train, by a confused welter of thoughts and emotions that left him, when he reached Grantham, hopelessly undecided and uncertain.

And it was a listless, tired man, who had pushed himself beyond the limits of his strength, who stepped from the train. Bruce and Murray, exultant, filled with a triumphant excitement, were waiting for him. They had expected him to be tired; his utter lassitude frightened them.

"It's all right," cried Bruce at once. "Stacy's putting the presses in place now. He's using language hot enough to melt 'em, but he says he'll get a run out of them somehow. You doped everything out right. They were getting ready to move those presses, on the strength of Sterling's wire, but his letter fooled them. They thought it would come by mail."

"We're working on the fire still," Murray cut in. "You can guess how much help the fire department is giving us in proving that it was incendiary! But there's no doubt about it, and I've got men on the trail."

"Good!" said Fargo dully. "Don't make any charge you can't prove. If you can prove a thing like that, it will beat them. If you accuse them without proof, it will kill any chance we've got."

Bruce and Murray exchanged quick glances. They were beginning to understand that more than exhaustion was behind Fargo's changed manner.

"There's the Spencer story," said Murray. "Of course you won't hesitate about that now."

"No," said Fargo slowly. "I'm not hesitating, Bob. We can't use it."

"John—you're crazy!" Murray broke out passionately. "Why, any weapon is fair after what they've done to us!"

"Hold on," said Fargo. "I guess I'd better explain. We can't print that story, Bob, because Spencer's niece and

I were married the night of the fire—Good God—it was only this morning!"

He spoke in a spent, flat monotone. But his words needed no emphasis. Murray blurted out the question that must have been in Bruce's mind, too.

"Does Spencer know?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Fargo. "I don't know what Mrs. Fargo's plans about an announcement were."

And at that Murray laughed. Had he been a woman, instead of a red-headed man six feet tall, that laugh would have been called hysterical. And, at that, hysteria was what ailed Murray. He wanted to shriek with laughter; not because he saw anything funny in all the world, but because everything had ended like this. And he managed to voice that idea.

"Then why the grand-stand play with the presses?" he asked. "I've been waiting for you to get here so that I could worship you for thinking of them. I knew about them, just as you did, but it was genius that made you see how they would pull us through. But—if you've married into Spencer's family, why did you make us think you were going to keep up the fight?"

"Because that's what I'm going to do!" said Fargo, roused to a show of vigor. "I can't use that story, but that's the only effect my marriage is going to have on this fight."

Murray shook his head and sank into a despondent silence. They walked along, without words, until they came to the building in which the *Bugle* was trying to rise, phoenixlike, from the flames. A small crowd was gathered before it, staring at a bulletin board that Murray had improvised. It bore a flamboyant announcement that the *Bugle* defied fire as it had defied every other enemy, and would appear next morning—singed, but still militant. And at the sight of that, Fargo grinned. He smiled again when he went inside and saw Stacy ruling the inferno of the

pressroom that was being made out of odds and ends.

"If they give us a paper to print, we'll print it!" said old Stacy.

"We'll give him a paper," said Murray grimly. "I've pulled off a few things myself, Fargo. You forgot one thing, with all you thought of—the stereotyping!"

"I did!" cried Fargo, stricken. "Great Scott!"

"It's all right. We dragged some stuff from the ruins—with the insurance adjusters threatening to have us arrested. And the boys have managed somehow. They say they can cast the molds—but don't ask any one how they'll do it! And I've had telegraph wires looped in—we'll get our A. P. service. I guess that's about all."

"It's enough!" said Fargo. He was fighting his way back, now, to his normal state; the flatness had left his voice. And suddenly he dropped his hand on Murray's shoulder. "Bob," he said, "you thought I'd lain down—quit! Maybe you even thought I'd sold out. I haven't. I can't explain much now—maybe I never can. But—I want you to know that I haven't thrown you and the other boys down. I've never stopped thinking about you. And if the *Bugle* goes down, I go, too!"

"Oh, hell!" said Murray uncomfortably. "Forget it! I know you're all right. I guess you were right about that damn' Spencer story, anyhow; all the time. It's a bit like blackmail. We'll beat them without it."

They climbed the narrow stairs, and on the first floor Murray took Fargo's arm unexpectedly and ran him into a big room that ran the whole depth of the building. It was full of men; the whole *Bugle* staff seemed to be there, night and day men both.

"Boys—here's the chief!" cried Murray.

Men turned from the work they were doing. And through the room there ran

a murmur that swelled into a cheer. Men crowded about him, slapping him on the back, reaching for his hands. But only for a moment. Then they went back to their work. They were writing at desks that had been evolved by laying planks over barrels, and they sat on soap and cracker boxes.

"It's a hell of an office!" said Murray, with a catch in his voice. "But it was the best we could do—and it will answer nicely, thanks! And—say! You haven't looked down to the end of the room yet."

Fargo looked, then, and felt as if the lump in his throat would choke him. For there was old Blaine, his coat off, his hands full of proofs, his white hair tousled. Fargo started toward him, and Blaine came halfway to meet him.

"Well—I came back, John," said Blaine. "I figured out I might be of some use, even if I was a bit out of date. I've been showing them a few of the tricks we had in the old days."

"You bet he has!" said Murray. "As far as I can make out, this sort of thing would have looked like sinful luxury when the old chief broke into the game. He's been making the boys feel they've got a lot to be thankful for."

"They have—and so have I!" said Fargo. "They've got him! Mr. Blaine—I've just found out why we had the fire. It was to bring you back."

"Oh, stuff, John!" said Blaine. "I'm too busy to talk to you now. Go and get some sleep." He chuckled. "It's a sinful thing to say—but I haven't been as happy as this for years."

Old Blaine voiced the spirit of the shop. Every one was happy—and confident. The possibility of defeat simply wasn't recognized. Even Fargo, with his own secret, gnawing trouble, which he couldn't quite forget, reacted to that air of exuberant, youthful triumph. But he had to take Blaine's advice. He had reached the limit of his powers. He wouldn't go home, and it was almost

by force that Bruce got him onto a couch in his private office. In a moment Fargo was asleep; and Bruce, smiling, flung a rug over him and left the rest to nature.

CHAPTER XV.

Fargo awoke, his eyes still heavy with sleep, to see Bruce smiling down at him. The late-afternoon sun came through the window, and he sat up, puzzled.

"Pretty fair!" said Bruce. "You've slept twenty-two hours, and it's Sunday afternoon! I guess you're fit to do some more work now."

"Good Lord!" said Fargo. "Some one ought to have waked me up! There were a million things for me to do—"

"They got done," said Bruce dryly. "Come on. Stick your head under the cold-water tap. I'll have coffee ready in a minute. I keep a percolator here to use when I work at night."

Fargo obeyed, and then Bruce flung him the paper that Blaine and Murray had produced. It was a nightmare of a paper—a scant eight sheets, and on Sunday, too! But it could be read.

"They were selling for a quarter apiece ten minutes after the first copies were on the street," said Bruce. "I believe the presses broke down five times, but Stacy and Blaine sat up with them and held their hands, and they printed the edition somehow." He chuckled. "Some paper!" he said. "If Spencer and Gormley and their gang didn't set that fire, there will be some libel suits to defend. But I guess they did."

Fargo jumped at that.

"Has Murray got the goods on them?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," said Bruce. "All I know is that he was tremendously excited about something, and said he and Hines were on the trail. Hines is your official bloodhound, isn't he?"

"Best police reporter in the State," said Fargo. "If there's anything to get, he'll get it."

"Go home and change your clothes and get a shave," said Bruce. "You look— Well, there aren't any words for it!"

"Right!" said Fargo. An hour later he was at the new office, and there he met Murray. Murray was still tremendously excited, as Bruce had said.

"I can't tell you anything definite yet," he said. "But we do know the fire was incendiary. Hines has proved that—and he's so close to the man who did the work that I'm jumping every time I hear the telephone ring."

"I'm afraid he's wasting his time," said Coffin. "And for Heaven's sake, Fargo, choke off the sort of stuff the sheet was full of this morning! Spencer isn't going to lie down under what amounts to a charge that he's sanctioned a fire bug's work!"

"You attend to your own job!" snapped Murray. "I'm still in charge of the editorial work on this paper."

"You two have been working too hard," said Fargo. "I don't believe you want to start a scrap now. Wait till after election."

Coffin smiled and turned away. But Murray's nerves were on edge; he glared at Coffin's back.

"Oh, it's all right!" he said. "But he's too damned calm!"

"It's his way, that's all," said Fargo. "Bob—"

A telephone bell rang sharply, and Murray leaped to answer it.

"Yes!" he cried. "That you, Hines? Oh—wait—I'll get him." He turned to Fargo. "For you. It's Spencer."

Fargo started. But he answered the call at once.

"Fargo?" said Spencer. Cold hate, an incredible menace, were in his voice. "Come to my house at once! I want to see you."

"What's that?" asked Fargo. "How

long have I been taking orders from you?"

"I want to see you at once," Spencer repeated, and added, as if to settle matters: "I've talked to Janet."

He didn't wait for Fargo to answer, but hung up the receiver at once. And Fargo knew that he had to go.

"I've got to see Spencer," he said to Murray. "I suppose I needn't explain."

"Glad to have you out of the way," said Murray. "I may have to get you there on the phone. All right?"

"Of course. I'll get back as soon as I can—but call me if you hear from Hines."

Spencer himself opened the door and let Fargo in. He seemed to have aged a little in the last few weeks, but he was hard still and grim. He led the way in silence into the library, which was, of all the rooms in that house, Janet's favorite and the one that Fargo associated with her. A fire was burning low on the hearth; a single, shaded light, at one side of the room, was the only other illumination. But there was light enough, even so, for Fargo to see Janet.

His heart leaped at the sight of her; it was all he could do to fight down his impulse to go to her and take her in his arms. She greeted him with the little jerky nod that he had laughed at the first day he had met her. And he saw, when Spencer, with an impatient exclamation, groped for the switch and flooded the room with light, that she was very pale and that her eyes were red. She had been crying, he saw, and the knowledge filled him with sensations he had never known before.

"We want light here!" said Spencer.

"I agree," said Fargo. He accepted the symbolism. "It's what we've wanted from the first and have never had."

He met Spencer's glare, eye to eye.

"Janet tells me that you and she

are married," said Spencer; "that you stole into my house by night and took her——"

"I told you nothing of the sort, of course," said Janet quietly. "I told you the truth—that I forced the wedding—that it was my mistake——"

Her blow struck home. Fargo turned quickly toward her, but she kept her eyes from meeting his.

"Until I heard that, I thought you were a fool—but I believed you were honest," said Spencer. "I thought that you fought fairly."

"By God!" said Fargo. "What do you know of fair fighting?"

"You tried to interfere with me in the conduct of my own business," Spencer went on, ignoring him. "You tried to vent your spite on me because of a thing most men would have forgotten. I was willing to be your friend. At any time since this fight started, if you had come to me and admitted your mistake, I'd have given you a hand and helped you to recover from your own folly.

"But—you wouldn't have my help. You attacked me in the lowest ways. You young fool—do you suppose I started the fight without knowing I could beat you? You never had a chance. And then, this morning, your filthy rag practically accuses me of having had a hand in the setting of the fire that burned you out! The fire has made no difference—if it's done anything, it's helped you, by creating a little maudlin sympathy for you. You were beaten before it broke out. But—I'd have forgiven even that charge. I'd have made allowance for your feelings and your excitement.

"And then—I find out that you've done this to me! That you stole into my house, when you knew you were beaten, and tried to save yourself by marrying my niece! You thought that would tie my hands. But—by God, it doesn't! She can choose between us. And if she chooses you, she'll do it

knowing that I'm going to smash you, and that she'll have to go down with you! That's what I brought you here to hear!"

Spencer stopped, shaking a little, but from the violence of his anger and not at all from weakness. Fargo groped for words. All at once he sensed dimly the tragic enlightenment that must come to Spencer. He understood that Spencer did not know all that he knew—and that Janet did. And, before he could speak, Janet got up and moved toward her uncle. She held him silent with a look, and when she spoke herself, her voice was sorrowful and infinitely tender.

"It's my turn now," she said. "I want you to listen to me, you two men. I want you both to know and to try to understand what I've done. Perhaps you can't—but you must try."

"I wanted to save you both. Each of you believes now that I betrayed him. Jack believes, Uncle Henry, that I made him marry me so that the *Bugle* couldn't print the story it had of the way you treated Buckley, years and years ago."

Spencer cried out hoarsely at that. A gray pallor spread over his face.

"Janet!" he cried. "What are you talking of?"

"You see," she said, turning to Fargo, "he didn't know, John. It was by sheer chance that that proof came into my hands. And now I can tell you what you wouldn't wait to hear that night. I never supposed that you would print that story. Perhaps you thought you would—but you would never have done it. I knew you well enough for that."

She stopped for a moment, and Fargo seized his chance.

"Janet!" he cried. "I've known ever since I stopped to think that you had done nothing wrong. I'd have come to you on my knees before this if—if everything hadn't happened as it did."

"I know," she said. And in the look she gave him there was the infinite patience of a mother for an erring child. Then suddenly her mood seemed to change. A tremendous passion rang in her voice as she went on.

"Oh—isn't it ever possible for men to know what a woman feels?" she cried. "There you were, you two men—the two people I loved best in all the world! You were fighting—when you should have been on the same side! And every blow you dealt one another struck at my chance for happiness. Because I was a woman, I had to stand aside and wait until one of you had won.

"And when that time came—how much chance for happiness would I have had? Suppose you had won, John. Could I have gone to you and left an old man that you had crushed behind—a man I had loved all my life and to whom I owed everything? And if you had been beaten—oh, you would never have let me come then. Your pride would have kept you from me. I suppose I'd have hated you if it hadn't. I'm as illogical as you are, in the end—and, after all, it's you I love, and that would have been a part of you. And so—and so—when I had gone nearly mad with thinking, I let myself go a little farther.

"I knew that if we were married, things would have to be made right somehow. We would be married—there would be that much to build upon! I had as great an interest in your fight as you yourselves. And I couldn't use your weapons. I had to take the ones I had. Oh, can you see?"

In a moment Fargo had reached her and swept her into his arms. And then, holding her, he turned to Spencer.

"I can see this!" he cried: "You're mine—and mine you'll stay! I don't know what else is going to come to me—and I don't care!"

She clung to him a moment before

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she freed herself and turned to Spencer. He stood still, eying them stonily. And just as she would have spoken, a servant came in.

"There's a telephone call for Mr. Fargo," she said.

Fargo glanced at Janet, and she nodded. Spencer sat down heavily, and only once was the silence broken while they waited for Fargo to return.

"Is it I who have been the fool?" Spencer said suddenly.

When Fargo came back, his eyes were grave. He looked away from Janet—from Spencer, too, for that matter.

"Mr. Spencer," he said, "first let me say that I'm quite sure you knew nothing of this. Burlington has confessed that he set the *Bugle* fire—or, rather, that he hired and paid the men who did the work."

"Burlington!" cried Spencer, in a strangled voice. "Burlington! It's a lie—— You're trying to trick me——"

"I'm sorry. It's true," said Fargo.

"Good God!" said Spencer. All at once he looked like an old, old man. "Burlington! Why? Why?"

"In his confession, he said he believed it was the only way to secure your election."

There was nothing grim or fierce now about Henry Spencer. Janet, her face white, went to him. And Fargo, with a feeling that he had no right to be there, spoke to her hurriedly, almost shamefacedly.

"I must go, Janet," he said. "I'll come to you as soon as I can—and the moment you call me, if you need me. Tell him—— Oh, I know he didn't know! I'll do the best I can."

CHAPTER XVI.

Fargo, sick with the tragedy of Spencer's face, felt no triumph, no exultation, as he hurried to the office. Only the thought of Janet sustained him now,

as it had dragged him down before. This story, he knew, could not be suppressed, and there was no question now of victory. No matter what the *Bugle* might say or do, Spencer must suffer for what Burlington had done. And even in his new sympathy for Spencer, Fargo could not feel that he was doing aught but reaping the crop that he himself had sown.

He nerved himself to meet a triumphant outburst when he entered the office. But only sober faces greeted him. Bruce and Murray, grave, concerned, came to meet him.

"I only told you half the story," said Murray at once. "You haven't heard the worst of it—Coffin's part."

"Coffin!" cried Fargo. "What has he to do with it?"

"He and Burlington have worked together from the first," said Murray. "It was through him that Burlington—and, of course, Spencer, too—got the exact information they always had about us. That was why they could time their blows so devilishly. And the heart of their scheme was this: They were to get the *Bugle*, after you were frozen out. Burlington felt he could handle Spencer and get his backing. It seems that Burlington knew, long before we did, of the old Buckley scandal, but had never been able to get the proof. Coffin gave that to him—and they meant to hold it over Spencer's head, later.

"And that was what brought the crisis. You see, Coffin never for a moment believed that anything would keep you from printing the story when you knew that it was the only chance you had to beat Spencer. And, of course, as an instrument of blackmail, it would have been useless if the *Bugle* had printed it. You see, Coffin's cynicism was what beat him in the end. He couldn't believe that people were ever decent and straight and honorable."

"Good God!" said Fargo. "But how

do you know all this? Where is Coffin?"

"Gone. He told me some of it—the rest he wrote out. He was consistent to the end. He's still the cynic. He's convinced, or says he is, that it was Burlington's fault that their plot collapsed. He damns Burlington eternally for confessing."

"And he's gone?"

"Yes. I should have had him arrested, I suppose. But I don't know — I imagine he managed to keep his own skirts clear. Burlington didn't name him in his confession. He'd have found some way to wriggle out of it. I'm rather sorry for Burlington. It looks as if he would turn out to be the only victim."

"No," said Fargo. "Don't forget Spencer. I've seen him—you haven't."

But Murray did see Spencer, and so did every other man in the office. He came striding in five minutes later, as grim and fierce as ever. He stood in the door for a moment, and then, when he saw Blaine, went straight to him. In his hand was a sheet of paper.

"You're back, are you, Blaine?" he said. "I want you to print this statement—I've signed it—in the most conspicuous possible fashion in to-morrow's paper. I've sent copies to the other papers, too. It seems that the law provides no way of taking my name off the ballot. But in this statement I am asking all who would have voted for me to vote for Marsh, instead. And—in the statement I acknowledge my full responsibility for the criminal actions of my employee, Burlington."

He spoke loudly enough to be heard in the four corners of the long room. And among those who listened a faint murmur rose and became, in the end, a sort of faint cheer.

"I'll see to it, Henry," said Blaine quietly. "That's all, is it?"

"Not quite," said Spencer. "I want you to send a man over to see me in

the store to-morrow. Until I can replace Burlington, I shall handle our advertising myself."

Blaine held out his hand.

"You're a good deal of a man, Henry," he said.

For the first time a smile lighted Spencer's grimness.

"There's some hope for us maybe, Blaine," he said. "We're not quite too old to learn, are we?" Then he turned to Fargo. "I've got orders to bring you home with me," he said. "Your wife wants you."

They went out together, and when they reached the street, Spencer spoke abruptly.

"You might as well know that I'm not half so sorry for all this as you may think," he said. "I'm not blind. I saw, a long time ago, how things were going to be between you and Janet. I fought you because it's my nature to fight—and I'd be fighting you yet if I hadn't begun to find out that it wasn't as fair a fight as I supposed it was. If you need my help, you can have it—but I guess you won't need any help if I stop trying to hurt you. You've got an idea of how to run that paper that will make you a richer man than your father ever thought of being."

Fargo made no answer, because it

seemed to him that there was nothing that he could say. In the hall, Spencer nodded toward the library, dark again now, save for the glow of the fire, and went upstairs without a word. It was before the fire that Janet was waiting. They had many things to say to each other now.

And then, much later, Fargo was appalled by the thought of all the work that lay before him.

"I've dreamed of our being married, you know," he said, "of the places we'd go to on our wedding journey. And now! Why, I haven't even begun to think of what's to be done! I can't possibly get away for months!"

"Do you think I care?" asked Janet. "I'm going to help, you know. I wouldn't go away. All the wedding journey I want we can take to your old place in the hills. I think it's going to snow to-night."

"But—Janet—— Oh, I suppose you didn't know! Janet—of all the land I had, that was the only thing I could sell when I simply had to have money. It's gone."

"It's not gone very far," she said. "Silly! Didn't you ever once suspect? It was I who bought it! And now it's my wedding present to you!"



A THUNDERSTORM

SORROW lay upon the Sky's wide breast,
Aching with a sweet unrest.
Of the Sun's hot passion was it born;
Sullen, its black being found its morn,
By long-suffering blest.
Then—a miracle—as with a roar
That which had been still before
Burst and fell, the Sky's sore heart to ease.
Tears, so sure to come, gently will cease
When the sorrow is no more.

ELIZABETH GUNN.



The One-Sixteenth

By Marie Conway Oemler

Author of "Linden Goes Home," "The Eternal Two," etc.

OH!" said the little Denton boy, stretching his arms above his curly head rapturously. "I'm glad we came here! I love this place! I love this place better than any other place in the world! I love the way it looks, and the way it smells, and"—he paused, wrinkling his small nose and blinking his big eyes—"I love mostest the way it *feels*. I guess," he added hesitatingly, "it's my kind of a feel. Mother'll know what I mean."

His mother's beautiful eyes swept over him embracingly, understandingly. She smiled, but did not speak.

"And what I love the bestest, mostest of all," finished the child fervently, "is Amos."

"I'm glad you came to my island, too," said Barstow. "And I congratulate your parents upon your discrimination. You're a wise kid. This place is the most perfect place on earth, and Harrison is its presiding genius."

The little boy looked at him solemnly.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Barstow, but I know what I want. I want you to give Amos to us. I want to live with him for good."

"Hear him, the predatory little treasure hunter!" hooted Barstow. "Ask, and take, half my kingdom, my child, but spare me my Harrison!"

"Do you love Amos, too, Mr. Barstow?"

"Why—I'm mighty fond of him, Hughie man. Mighty fond of him."

"Does he love you, Mr. Barstow?"

"Well, I think he likes me pretty well, Hughie. Yes, I think he likes me very well indeed," smiled Barstow.

"Because," said the child, nodding his head, "he loves me, Mr. Barstow. He loves me better than anybody else in the world. And I love him."

At that all of us began to laugh; all, that is, but the little man's mother, who leaned her head on her hand and watched him thoughtfully. Hughie's mother never laughed at him. She always seemed to understand.

Harrison appeared in the doorway at that moment, announcing dinner, and involuntarily we turned to look at him. He was a tall, coppery man, slightly darker than a dark mulatto, with a still, grave face that had something almost Oriental in its calm. He had, too, that very real dignity of person which some negroes are able to attain. No other mortal ever possessed such a perfect voice, so full, so clear and bell-like in its modulations. There was in it a gold-and-velvet quality that made me think that this man's speaking voice was, like Caruso's singing voice, unmatchable. It was singularly correct and cultivated, even. Harrison had been through Tuskegee. This did not hurt his cooking any.

"I picked him," Barstow used to boast, "ripe off a Pullman. But not too ripe. He's my dearest treasure. I can depend upon him absolutely. He's so decent I feel apologetic for Providence's obvious error in creating him a nigger—and making some nigger a white man by the same mistake at the same time, I dare say. Harrison got mixed in the shuffle. It wasn't fair."

It wasn't.

Now Barstow had brought us—Doctor Denton and his wife and child and

me—to his island; one of those idyllic islands off the Georgia coast, all topaz and turquoise and emerald and opal; shimmering, glimmering marshes on all but one side, where the ocean breaks and opens out an endless horizon, blue on deepening blue.

The house was just big enough not to be too big, and the rooms, with their open fireplaces, were full of the unforgettable fragrance of cedar wood, which is the smell of the Georgia coast. Through the wide-open, shutterless windows and doors, the island looked in unhindered and unchecked, like a wild and lovely face. Barstow loved this place above all his many possessions; he liked to take us about it in the big red touring car that Harrison drove, skimming down long brown lanes of pines and skirting lordly live oaks, flashing through open and sunny glades and then out on the yellow, hard-packed beach sand.

Denton had come, frankly, for a needed rest to save him from a threatened breakdown; Barstow had literally dragged him by the hair of his head from a mountain of overwork. Mrs. Denton had come because she wanted Denton to be sure of a rest, and this place promised it. And I—oh, well, what's the use? I had come because Mrs. Denton had. I wondered if she suspected that her presence had really occasioned mine—that the desire to see her, to hear her speak, to watch her eyes, had battered down all saner considerations.

One was not generally allowed, though, to know what Annie Denton thought. She rarely talked, and then not brilliantly, though what she said was always simple, unaffected, and sincere. She had the serene dignity of a disciplined and discerning spirit, and her clear gaze held yours as if, while she respected your opinions, she weighed their value.

Sometimes a living light flashed into

her face. Her smile was reticent, as if behind it lay a vast reserve; like a surface nugget, it promised treasure below. She was the only beautiful woman I have ever known whose beauty was neither an asset nor a lure, but rather an effect of character. This—and perhaps, too, a haunting hint of passion—was perhaps the secret of her curious appeal.

For in a world of painted lies, of simulated sentiments, this woman appeared vibrantly vital, and so natural that she conveyed the effect of classicism, of being one of those immensely real and warmly human women who in all ages have embodied art and romance and moved men and kingdoms. Such a one, finger on lip, might in a crucial moment reveal herself: "Behold, I, even I, am Beatrice!"

When I had first seen her, a trained nurse at old Cocroft's grisly bedside, I had fallen in love with her, of course; that had been inevitable. But when I had thought of my mother's attitude in the face of such a probability as an unknown trained nurse for a daughter of the house of Hemingway, pure laughter had seized me. One could see at once the impossibility of the thing.

Later, when she had married Denton, I had agreed that an obscure young man may marry an obscure young woman. He had come up out of that obscurity, of course, and in a very few years, too. One might have suspected Fame of lying in wait for him around the nearest corner. And if he had become what many liken to a lighthouse on the borderland, it was his wife who kept the lamp filled with holy oil and the light alive. She gave to her generation his genius. Even my mother, in whom flowered to perfection that pure snobbery indigenous to republican soil, was more than willing now to admit to her sacrosanct circle the great scientist's beautiful and gifted wife.

Denton said he had thirty-seven

years of not enough sleep to make up for and only a few weeks to do it in, and would we please, for Heaven's sake, let him hibernate undisturbed? Barstow was generally overseeing some of his endless improvements. The child haunted Harrison. Mrs. Denton and I were flung upon each other's mercy perforce.

I had known her in her working days, grave and responsible; I had met her later, beautiful and courted, the wife of a famous man. But now I was to see the sheer childlike gayety of her, the vital joy in living, the quaint, sly humor, naïve and stingless. And how she could sing! Quavering plantation melodies, crooning lullabies, sweet old "spirituals" with the beat of pagan tom-toms undernoting their plaintive Christian meekness. I was astonished at the songs and the singing of them. This was a genius that interpreted the negro, and I told her so. She treated them lightly; she had learned them, she said carelessly, from a friend—oh, years and years ago, when she was a little child.

The passion begun in Crocroft's sick room, when I hadn't been general attorney for International, but just struggling John Hemingway, with more name than money, grew to its height there in the open, in those idyllic days. I loved her with an intensity, a tumultuous tenderness, to which no other emotion I had ever experienced could be for a moment comparable. That she knew it—that she must always have known it—I am quite sure. And by the exquisite miracle of her, I know she loved me, too.

For she had reached high tide. You have never seen high tide in the marsh country? First, there is a slow and scarcely perceptible ripple, when the water lips the land tentatively. It grows into a lapping, swinging, sweeping, long onrush, driving up from the heart of the sea. Then the gullies and

runnels and lanes and creeks fill. And then—high water.

There was no need of speech between us two. Open-handedly, as if by divine right, each gave of the garnered riches of the soul to the other, and there was no shadow of evil or disloyalty to dim that free, priceless gift. What I might have been I was, for that little, little time. What she always was in truth, she permitted me to see. I am sure neither of us ever cherished one thought that dishonored Denton. That he had loved and honored and appreciated her from the first made me love and honor and appreciate him all the more now. Because she knew this, she was unafraid to love me.

The island, the sea, the marsh, the spring itself, seemed to lie for a space under a happy spell. Then came a great spring tide, under which the tops of the tallest marsh grasses disappeared, and we were in a world of water; and on the heels of that, a day and a night of driving rain and roaring ocean and shrieking northeast wind. Barstow laughed. He said the woods must be all the greener and fresher for their drenching, and advised us to go out o' doors the very first minute we got the chance, and "smell Madame Nature with her face and hands washed in rain water."

We took Barstow's advice, on the translucently beautiful morning after the storm. We had walked through the wet garden, defying rain-drenched bushes, which exhaled a sweet and spicy fragrance. The little boy, shouting joyfully, ran by us, a sailboat Harrison had made for him in his hands. He held up the pretty, graceful toy for his mother to see, and she waved her hand to him motherly as he flashed past.

"Mr. Hemingway," she said abruptly, "what do you think of my little boy?"

"Hughie?" Why, I think he—he's a little boy," said I laughingly. But she looked at me earnestly.

"I wanted him," she said, "to look like Hugh, and he doesn't. He doesn't even look like me. He isn't the least little bit like either one of us, Mr. Hemingway. It's a disconcerting thing that one's own dear and beloved child should be so—so unlike—isn't it? Oh, I do so wish he had looked like Hugh!"

"He's a very different type, certainly," I admitted. "But a very striking and handsome one, too, if you please! I've never seen darker hair and eyes. Perhaps one of you has a strain of Latin or Oriental blood, and it shows in Hughie. The persistence of a racial strain follows some apparently freakish, but nevertheless very powerful, lay. One may have, for instance, a Spanish or a Jewish or an Irish great-great-grandmother. One's own immediate progenitors, for some generations, have been, say, English or German—anything you like—and the family shows the proper Saxon type. Then, presto!—out of God knows what subconscious racial depths—pops that great-great-very-great old grandmother! Submerged and clean out of sight through all those intervening generations, she's been vitally alive all the while; they've carried her forward with them, and there she is! And she'll keep right on popping in and out, for generations after her descendants have forgotten they ever had such an ancestress. Why, I've seen Egyptian faces walking about on Broadway!"

"Somehow, I hadn't thought of that," said she, and her voice was troubled. "It isn't fair. It's as if one got mixed in a horrible shuffle and couldn't find oneself any more; as if your own mother weren't really your own mother, but some old dead-and-gone-and-good-riddance-to-her grandmother, maybe. And your own child isn't your own child; he's somebody else's that's been dead this hundred years and never saw him, any more than you'll see the children that are

really yours, because they won't be born for a hundred years after you're dead. And then they'll walk about alive with your lost and forgotten face and talk with your voice and repeat your disposition, and they'll be aliens to the woman who opened the gates of life for them—Oh, it isn't fair! Nothing's fair, really!"

"But the whole thing is such a fascinating, living picture puzzle, for folks that are wise enough to like living picture puzzles pieced together," I told her lightly.

"There are times," said she, with brooding eyes, "when one is sardonically allowed to fancy that one may be permitted to play creator. I, for one, fancied that I made my own life, shaped my own destiny, created myself, and created it different from what I had been. And all along I've been just what everybody else is—nothing but a little something in the relentless, shaping hand of a bigger Something Else!"

There came just then a wind like a sigh from the full heart of the spring; it was sweet with wet and woodsy odors and full of unimaginable balm. I looked up and saw how, against the deep, glad blue of the clean, fresh sky, the tops of the pine trees swayed to a gay measure, and how in and out of their brown boles the long, bright spears of the sunlight flashed goldenly. I laughed aloud for sheer pleasure. What is one to do but be happy on such a day? And were not we two alive and together? I leaned over and touched her lightly.

"All this of Pot and Potter—tell me, then, Who is the Potter, pray, and Who the Pot?" said I, and laughed again. "Why, here's a whole day, a perfect day, to just be alive and glad in! Ah, let everything else go by and be happy, humanly happy, right here and now—with me!"

Her eyes lost their shadow. She

looked at me gratefully, as if she read what I might not put into words.

"I shall begin my whole happy day, then, by going out for an hour in the car with Hughie, as I promised. No, you can't come—you're to stay at home and write at least some of those letters you've been grumbling must be written. And I'll hurry back. And we'll have the rest of the day—every minute of it—free. Free to be happy in! Think of it!"

"I do," said I dismally. "But I've got to say good-by for a disgustingly busy hour or two!"

"Good-by!" said she, and ran into the house, sweetly calling for Hughie.

The letters, once begun, took longer than I had anticipated. Denton, fresh from his morning nap, strolled into the library before I had quite finished my task. He looked clear-eyed and healthy and very handsome. His pallor had given place to a clean-skinned freshness.

"When I get back into harness, Hemingway," he remarked complacently, "I'll be fit to do the work of three men. Heavens, how I needed this rest! I've Annie to thank for it, of course—as I have her to thank for everything good that's ever come to me." His face softened, as it always did when he spoke of his wife. "But—I'm getting uneasy. I miss the shafts and straps."

His eye fell upon a sheaf of note paper on the desk. He dropped into a chair, drew pen and paper toward him, and in a moment had forgotten my presence.

He was still absorbed when Barstow blew in like a gust of wind.

"I'm hungry as a bear!" said the big man. "Hello! Where's Harrison? What? You mean to tell me that car's not back yet? Why, they've been gone nearly four hours! They're having tire trouble, sure as shooting. I'll have the team out and hunt 'em up."

He went out quickly, to issue orders.

Denton, who had looked up rather vaguely, resumed his writing. As for me, tired of my hours in the library, I decided to walk down the shell road and let the team overtake me.

I went out, whistling. And I thought at first what I presently saw crawling toward me was a wounded beast, for it came all fours. Twice, before I could reach it, it collapsed in a heap; then it rose and moved forward again, swinging from side to side, bearlike. It was moaning feebly when I bent over it and recognized, through blood and sweat and mud and the white dust of the shell road, the ashy-gray face of Harrison. He tried to speak, lifting his staring eyes to my face—and blood poured out of his mouth instead of words.

It seemed to me an age before Barstow came running, in answer to my shouts, and we got the man to the house. He was pretty far gone. Then Denton, in spite of his deadly fear, gave immediate aid and washed and bandaged him. When at last he opened his eyes, he looked at Denton piteously.

"Little bridge—back creek," he mumbled. "Hughie—was laughing. My—my leg dragged—and it took me a long time—to get them. I—put them together. And then I crawled—and crawled—"

Denton gave him a stimulant, and he begged that Mr. Hemingway would stay with him while the others went. He had to speak to Mr. Hemingway.

Barstow and Denton and the colored foreman and his men had gone—to the little bridge by the back creek. And it was such a beautiful day! Only a few hours before, I had been so glad to be alive! I sat by the still, bandaged thing on the bed and felt like some one in a nightmare, some one who wasn't John Hemingway any more.

I was to look, Harrison said presently, in the bottom of his trunk, and bring him the package wrapped in tis-

sue paper. So I got it and unwrapped, as he asked me, a few letters—evidently from a young child—a photograph of a pretty, serious little girl with long curls, a tress of very bright brown hair, and, wrapped separately, a most lovely photograph of Mrs. Hugh Denton. The dying negro met my outraged and furious inquiry as to this last with a mild and tranquil smile.

"She told me to—show you these. And I am—to tell you everything," he said. And, conquering by a last supreme effort of will his mortal pain and weakness, he told me. I cannot put into words his manner of telling it, or the pauses for breath, or the failing of his golden voice, or his utter unconsciousness of himself.

"When I first saw Daphne," said Harrison, "she was one day old. I came home and told my mother that Cousin Lula Lane had a white baby. My mother reminded me that Lula Lane was so white herself most folks couldn't tell she wasn't."

"Well, her baby's all white," I said.

"But my mother shook her head.

"When you're some nigger, you've got to be all nigger," she said. "Lu's white baby's just the rest of us all."

"But Lu's baby wasn't. She was born different. Every now and then somebody gets born so. You can't explain why. They're just what they are. I knew it about Lu's baby, from the first. It was I that taught her to walk and to talk."

"I guess she was about three years old when Lula died of meningitis, and my mother brought the child home to our house on Wilmington Island. Now Wilmington Island's a grand place for children, so she grew up strong and healthy. She was six when I was an overgrown sixteen, teaching the county school, which was a log house in an old cotton field. I used to take her along to school with me, and I taught her to read, to keep her busy. It was easy,

for she was crazy to learn. The only trouble she ever gave me was trying to answer the questions she asked me.

"That year the county superintendent brought a little niece of his with him on his annual visit. It was the first glimpse Daphne'd had of a little girl like that, and it sort of woke up something in her. For, 'Amos,' says she, trudging along home with me that afternoon, 'Amos, now I know what I'm going to be like. I'll be like that other white child, Amos.'

"But you can't. You're a colored child, honey."

"It didn't seem a hard thing to be. I'd been a colored child, and a mighty happy one, too. Most of 'em are. But Daphne was different, as I've said.

"But do I have to keep right on being that, Amos? Even when I look white and—and *feel* white, Amos? Why, Amos? Why?"

"God knows, child. Because you were born that, I reckon, and folks have to be what they're born."

"She looked up at me with her big eyes—it was a long, funny look for a little child to give you—but she didn't ask me any more questions about it.

"At the end of the second term, I gave up the school, because they didn't pay enough, and left the island for a while. I tried my hand at barbering, because I made more money. You see, I had to give that child there on the island the kind of things she needed and wanted—frocks like the 'other white child' had worn. I wanted her to have the books she was always wishing for. I wanted her to have pretty shoes and stockings and ribbons and things like that. If you'd seen her, you'd understand why."

"I was always sending her things, and so she got to depend on me, and I learned to love her, like you do love a beautiful and good child that looks to you for everything. And all the time I was away—working at my trade

by day and studying at night—she kept right on growing up, and she grew up in her own way, quiet and thoughtful and lonesome, keeping to herself and her books and her flowers.

"She was sixteen the year my mother died, and I'd come home for the last vacation I was ever to spend there. The little house was like a new pin, all sweet and clean and dainty and full of flowers. She had on a gingham frock she'd made herself, and she was the prettiest girl I'd ever seen, before or since—so pretty I was mortal afraid when I thought of things she didn't even dream of. When you're a colored girl—and you look like that—

"You see, I'd taught her to talk and to walk and to read and to say 'The Lord is my Shepherd' at night, and I'd sung her to sleep with our old spirituals and told her our old stories by the fireplace, and I'd loved her from the day she was born; not the way you might think, either. It was the sort of love that you'd be like to feel for a friendly angel, if you knew one. It made you better and it couldn't hurt the angel any.

"'Amos,' said she, one night, all of a sudden, 'I know you're good and kind and steady, and you study hard, too. Well, now, what are you studying for?' says she. 'What are you going to be, Amos?' Just like that!

"'Who? Me?' I was on a Pullman then and liked the work fine. 'Why, I shall stay with the company.'

"'But—just a Pullman porter? For always, Amos?'

"'Why, isn't that a mighty good job for a nigger man?' I laughed when I said it.

"'Yes; if you can think of yourself like that,' said she. 'And there really isn't such an awful lot ahead for—for niggers—is there, Amos? None of the great, big, worth-while, work-in-the-open things, I mean. Oh, yes, I know all about the leading the race and the

uplift of the negro and all the rest of that sort of talk! But it's so often the blind leading the blind, and you do it because there isn't much else for you to do, is there? And people—white people—have an attitude toward it somewhat like Doctor Johnson's to the dog on his hind legs—it's nothing much in itself, but the marvel is that the dog can do it at all.

"'I didn't ask to be born!' she burst out. 'But here I am, what I am. And being what I am, I want my chance. I want to start fair. Nobody alive should have a check put upon a just and lawful ambition to grow, to arrive, to reach the highest that's in them. The sky alone should be the limit. Nobody should dare to say to another human being, "You can't, you mustn't, you shall not, because you're a negro"—or because you're anything else! But they can and they do, Amos. And it's not fair! Why shouldn't I have my chance, starting fair? Why shouldn't I take my place among the runners, without any handicaps? Oh, when I think of things as they are—when I know what I want to do, what I could do, my heart wants to burst!'

"She got up quickly and went into the house—we'd been sitting on our porch—and turned up the lamp on our sitting-room table; then she sat just where the light fell full upon her.

"'Look hard at me, Amos!' said she. 'Now, then, tell me honestly what you think of me?'

"She had those eyes that are gray, but look black at times, and brown hair. She'd gotten that from her white father, along with her creamy skin that was pale, but warm and lovely at the same time. He'd given her those, along with her life—and then left her to do the best she could with herself. There was a dimple in her chin, and it came to me I'd never seen any of our people with a dimple in the chin—and it was a white girl sitting there

in my house looking at me— It didn't seem right. Oh, God ought to have something to say and to do to the white fathers of girls like that!

"I stammered, 'Well, I think you're the prettiest and the best and the nicest human being I ever laid my eyes on, if that's what you mean.' Though I knew it wasn't.

"Oh, pretty!" says she, and shook her head. "As to that, Amos, I don't know whether to be glad or sorry. Time will decide about that. But I do know—and she leaned forward, she was so earnest—"that I'm fifteen-sixteenths white, and I refuse to be held down by—by the one-sixteenth any more. Amos—I've always meant this, I think—Amos, *I'm going over white!*

"I can't have a square deal with the smaller part of me outweighing the bigger balance. Oh, I'll work! I'll learn! I'll be face to face, equal with, the people that are like me, the real me. If I have to stay down, I'll smother! For there's something here"—she struck her breast—"that's like a fire burning day and night, to go on and up! And I'm going! And I'm going—white!"

"I began to choke a little, then. She'd always sort of been the center of everything for me, you see.

"And I—what of me?" I asked.

"She reached across the table and patted my hand. I had to see how horribly black mine was against hers.

"Oh, don't you see? It'll be for you, too, Amos—through me. And you'll be what you've always been—my sheet anchor. You'll stand by."

"Go ahead, child. I'll stand by. And if you need my hide for a doormat, have me skinned."

"She shook her head.

"It isn't," she said, "that I want to walk up over anybody's life, Amos. No. I only want to play the big game in my own way, without let or hindrance. I'm staking my one-sixteenth

against all the rest of me, Amos, and I stand to win or lose—myself. For I will have for myself nothing but the best."

"All right. I'll help you, of course," said I. "But for the life of me, I can't see why you want to clean turn your back upon the only people that have ever done anything for you. You don't know white people, Daphne. I do. White people are a crazy sort of people. They're never satisfied with what they are or what they have, but they must kill themselves trying to be more and have more and do more. You won't be happy with them. They're not always good to women who work—and who are beautiful at the same time. And you could do more—for your other people."

"I couldn't," she said. "And I don't want to be *happy*, particularly. I want the gambling chance to see what *I* can do, with a fair start. Amos, I'm horrid, if you like, for I'm not so much interested in—the other people—as I am in—me."

"You'll be caught," I warned her, "between the devil and the deep sea. You better stay down with us. You'll be warmer."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of freezing, Amos," she said. "I'm like those explorers who go after the poles—they'd rather run the risk of freezing to death than give up their chance."

"I suppose you are, and you can't help it," I sighed. "And I reckon, honey, I was thinking more of me than of you when I spoke. You see, child, it'll be just the same as if you died. You'll cross a dead line, and you can't come back to me, and I can't go over to you."

"She looked at me curiously.

"I could wish," she said, "that you had just a little more of the sportsman's viewpoint, Amos."

"And right then I knew that was the voice of the white people speaking

out loud in Daphne, and that she had to go her own way to find her own kind. So I said:

"All right, honey. Go. I'll stay here on the other side of the line, ready to help all I can. I can at least save you, Daphne, from what the white men don't save *their* girls from—lack of fire in winter, lack of shoes and clothes and food. They're none too kind to their girls who work, the white men aren't. And when one is as pretty as you are, and alone, they're willing to be kind—the wrong way. I can save you from that. You'll start fair, as you want to."

"So when she went, there was enough to tide her over the first worse plunge—the hunt for work, for a place. And she knew there was always going to be enough—that she'd never have to be afraid of being cold or hungry or without clothes to keep her looking nice or a decent place to shelter her. That in itself gave her courage to go on.

"She went first to a girls' home in Boston that I knew of. And because she could sew so beautifully, they got her tailoring work to do—men's clothes that a girl finishes at home, and that sort of thing. That's how she met the other sewing girl, Annie Lane. After a while, they found they could live cheaper rooming together. By that time the folks that knew them thought them sisters, by the name.

"Daphne found her ideal in Annie Lane. She said Annie had the purest soul and the tenderest heart and the sweetest eyes ever given a girl this side of heaven. She said this was the white woman at her best—up against the worst, and tried and tested by fire, and found pure gold. She wasn't strong, for she'd come of poor folks and she'd been in a factory, then in sweatshops, then tailoring. So she had no chance to be strong, and no one cared whether she went up or down or lived or died, until Daphne came and loved her. But

Daphne couldn't keep her long. She died in the cold of the winter. I paid for her coffin. Daphne and I put her away decent. And—she was buried as Daphne Lane. Who cared anything about a sewing girl's first name, anyhow?

"Then Daphne picked up and came to New York—as Annie Lane.

"And I'll be," said she, "all she never had a chance to become. There's two of us to make up for. And if ever I meet temptation," she said, "I'll remember I'm Annie—and I couldn't do anything that wasn't right—no, not if you rubbed me to death on barbed wire!" she said.

"She'd been studying in night schools all along. God knows how she managed it! And presently she was at work typewriting, at seven a week to start with, which wasn't so bad. After a while the man in charge noticed how pretty she was, and told her she was wasting her time and his—a face like hers was worth more than seven a week. And another man there kept after her to let him introduce her to his crowd and get her on the stage, where she'd see more life and have a better time seeing it. She wrote me that the stage might have tempted her—before she knew as much as she did by that time. Besides, there wasn't any stage part as fascinating and thrillingly as the real part she was playing every day—not only playing it, but living it. The man in charge was persistent. So Miss Lane left him one morning, without notice.

"I'd never been really afraid for her, once she found out. You hear a lot about the purity of snow. But snow's like those people that can't stand finding out things. Touch it, and it's soiled; it ends in a dirty mess. The only really pure thing on earth is fire. You can't touch it or stain it or soil it or spoil it, although you can kill it. It burns even the dirtiest dirt into clean

ashes, and all the time it goes right on being itself—fire, clean fire. Some women have that sort of fire—purity. Annie Lane had it, and Daphne had it. It was that which made them and kept them—white.

"When I saw her that winter, she'd gotten a place as stenographer in a big hotel, and she was still wearing black for Annie. She was thinner, and she'd changed. Something had come into her face that stayed there always. It was still and calm and full of power and of peace, like one of our clear nights full of stars. I felt somehow as if I'd been allowed to see her spirit after she'd died. I couldn't call her 'Daphne' any more, and that seemed to pain her, though she accepted it—as a development.

"In such a public place as this," she told me, "my face is sometimes my misfortune, Amos, though some seem to think it my fortune. I've been asked by a dozen men to marry them. So I'm going to leave. I'm tired of typing. There's no progress, no chance, no growth in it. One becomes much of a machine oneself. I'm going to get into something more vital. I shall enter a hospital for training as a nurse this spring."

"I think it was in her second year at the hospital that she met Doctor Denton. He wasn't known then, and I hardly think he was what any one would call very promising. But she seemed to be able to pierce right through to his soul. There might not be any Doctor Denton as he is to-day if she hadn't.

"When she graduated, she let me pay for her class pin. I sent her a great bunch of roses, something like the roses that used to grow on our old porch back at home on Wilmington Island. I couldn't go to see her, of course. But I was content to stay down where I was, being what I was, and knowing for my comfort that all the time she

was up there far above me, busy and successful and fairly contented, and meeting her own sort face to face equal.

"Doctor Denton kept close enough to her after she left the hospital. If she'd been able to see his soul, he was able to see hers, too. And he knew she was the only thing that could save him, because he loved her with the best of himself, "God bless him! He was born a genius, but he'd inherited nerves and whisky along with them, and dope looked mighty good to him at times. That high-strung, race-horse type is always on a hair-trigger edge. He'd fought his way up from a barren farm; he'd been starving and freezing and experimenting, and failing, and trying again, and half succeeding, and going on again— And then his nerves would dance the devil's hornpipe, and he'd run for the morphine needle to quiet 'em. She told me.

"One night he told her that if she cared to invest in futures—those were his words—and would marry him, he thought he could win out. And when he won, it would be big and worth while. She said she must think it over with herself. And so all that long night she weighed things in the balance, with that clear brain of hers. And you don't know her if you dare to think she was thinking of herself so much then as of what was the right and wise and best thing to do.

"She said she was like somebody flung head over heels into the middle of a whirlpool and, still conscious all the while, sucked up and down and under and about, with bits and glimpses of all her past life whirling about with her like straws in the water. Sometimes disconnected bits of things torn loose from chapters I used to begin school with of a morning in the log house on Wilmington swam with her for a moment and then went down. '*The Lord is My Shepherd*' slipped by and sank; '*Out of the depths have I*

cried unto Thee' swirled by and burst in a bubble; but 'All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me' stayed by her longest.

"Then she tried to lay hold on some one thing of all these things, to steady herself with, and she couldn't grasp any; they slipped out of her clutching hands; they went up and down and around and about with her. But she couldn't hold fast to anything but herself. And so, after a while, she got spent, and she just swung around without any more struggles.

"And presently she felt that she'd been swung out of the deep waters, and she rested. And it was then that she began to see, as it were, a purpose behind herself and what she meant; a purpose behind all she'd struggled for and won, and behind the bigger struggle still ahead. And she was able to decide what was to be done.

"At daylight she wrote two notes—one to him and one to me. She knew my northbound run would bring me into town just about then. I was able to go to her immediately, as she told me to.

"'Amos,' said she, the minute she saw me, 'Amos, my hour has struck. The thing I was born for is upon me. I'm going to marry Hugh Denton.'

"Now I hadn't thought of her marrying, any more than you'd think of a spirit marrying. 'There shall be neither marriage nor giving in marriage—' I was terrified, so that I shook. Before I could speak, she held up her hand.

"'Amos, I'm going to marry him because it's ordained. He's a great genius—and a weakling. Heaven and hell, Amos, are wide open to such a man to choose from. If I let him go, he's lost. But if I marry him, I'll pull him up Jacob's ladder by the hair of his head and he'll question the angels that ascend and descend; I'll give him the Big Dipper to drink from—not whisky,

either!—and I'll show him how to make stepping-stones of the fixed planets and so walk dry-shod across the gulfs. I'll give a genius to the race. And—it'll be a free-will offering, a gift from the one-sixteenth to the rest of me—from you and all the black people underneath, in me, to all the white people—in me, too! That'll be worth while, that'll be a great gift, Amos, will it not?'

"'It'll be a great gift,' I said. My teeth chattered, for I was mortally afraid for her. 'But if they knew, they wouldn't thank you. They'd damn you for that one-sixteenth—that presumed.'

"'They?' She looked up vaguely. 'Oh, I wasn't thinking of that sort. You become futile, once you allow yourself to become afraid—of *them*. I was thinking of the race itself, Amos, and of the white people—in me.'

"'And what of—him? Will you tell him?'

"'I couldn't run the risk—for his own sake. He's too close to the brink already. I'll stake myself for his great chance.'

"Now, I hadn't been studying and learning my lessons, either, all those long, lonesome years underneath, for nothing. Because if you love and suffer very much, you have to learn. I reckon God is somewhat like the state—He has to resort to compulsory education. We'd never be willing to learn of our own accord; we'd always be running away from school and teachers. So we have to go, willing or not, because there's a Law that forces us to. After a while we learn to study willingly; we want to learn. Then They put something in our hearts and we're helped to understand what's in other folks' hearts, too. We've got the big lesson—that whether they're black or white or rich or poor or wise or simple, people, real people, are all exactly alike in the big things, the real things, the human things, because all things

have the same bed rock, and that's love. Because I'd learned that, I understood her now.

"Are you sure you love him enough to do this for him, child?"

"She drew her brows together as if something had hurt her.

"As to that," she said, "why, I love him enough. There was a man, Amos, that I might have loved—as men and women love each other—if things had been otherwise. But they were not, and I'd have been a stumblingblock to him, while to this man I'll be a saving hand." And she began to smile with a sort of triumph. "See how things work out! Why, even the training your mother gave me will come to this man's aid! And all my other training, that he needs so greatly in his work—he shall have all. I'll be worth while. All any man ever dreamed any woman could be to him, I'll be all that to Hugh Denton!"

"If you're sure he's worth *you*," I said, "marry him. No man worth his salt could have you and fail. Marry him, force him to win, be happy. But, Daphne, if ever a time should come when he might forget what you have done for him, if for any cause whatever he should evilly use you, or look upon you in a manner that shames you or makes you unhappy, then *I* will come up from underneath and kill him with my hands!"

"He'll win," she said. "And he'll always love me."

"God grant it!" said I. "And now, my child, the time has come for you and me to tell each other good-by for good and all. You've been my blessing from the day you opened your eyes in this world, and I'll be proud and glad because of you until the day I close mine. You and I won't forget that, either of us. But if you should see me any more after this, you must pass me by, or bow to me as a white lady does to a colored man that has

served her. And I'll speak to you only as I would to any other white lady that said, "How do you do, Amos?"'

"The tears ran down her face at that.

"Amos, Amos," said she, weeping, "this is the bitterest price I've yet been called upon to pay! I've never met any other man—no, not one—so good, so unselfish, so strong and brave and true as you. No man can be more than a gentleman, Amos, and you're a very fine gentleman indeed. Good-by, then. My true, true friend, God bless you and—good-by!"

"Then I was bold enough to ask—because I very much wanted to have something so much a part of her to bury with me some day—for one of Daphne's curls. She shook down her beautiful hair, still weeping, and bent toward me. And I cut one off, as if I were taking it from a head already in its coffin.

"And after she was married, and she'd steadied him, and under her hand he was going up and up and up, and he'd gotten his first big success, she sent me the photograph, to show me it had been worth while. And I saw how she'd grown along with him, into the loveliest lady that ever was, and how no man living could look upon her face, that was so lovely and so true, and not know she was good even more than she was beautiful.

"I don't think she knew, at first, that I was with Mr. Barstow, for I'd kept down, out of sight. I didn't want her to be reminded of—anything that might sadden her. But Mr. Barstow's so fond of Doctor Denton, and so proud of his friendship, and he was so insistent about the trip, and she knew the doctor needed it, and she had to come, too. When we met face to face, I didn't give a sign that I even knew her. She knew that was best, for the child's sake, though I think it pained her. But by that time I'd gotten used to the notion

that Daphne, my Daphne, was dead, and lying in that grave marked with her name. I couldn't, somehow, think of the beautiful lady that was Mrs. Denton as the child that had been Daphne.

"The child took to me at sight. I've cried with happiness because of him. I guess I loved him too much, for somehow he seemed nearer to us than ever she had been. She hadn't counted on that. She thought that if one tried hard, one might be able to make things over, to wipe it out—and there it was, in spite of her!

"He had begged and coaxed in his pretty way that she should come out with us in the car; he'd been kept two whole days indoors, and he was wild to be out. So she yielded. I think she wasn't sorry for that one chance for a word with me.

"The little chap wouldn't sit in the tonneau with her. No, he must be right beside Amos. He climbed over and snuggled against me, with his two small hands tight about my arm. After a while, she leaned forward and said:

"'I'm glad my little boy likes you. I think he *loves* you, Amos.' And then she asked: 'Do you notice that he's different from—his father and me? Mr. Hemingway says some submerged blood shows itself in him.' And she added, like she was talking to herself: 'I was very differen' too. I should have remembered he would be different—in some other way. And he is. Amos, Hughie's hair is almost *kinky*!'

"Ahead of us, the road was clear, and I speeded a bit to please Hughie. I slowed down before we reached the bridge. It looked perfectly all right. But—although we couldn't see it from the road—the whole bank had been undermined by the high tide and the storm. We were on the bridge, and Hughie was laughing—and it gave way.

"The creek is steep and narrow. It was low tide. You could see the little trickle of water in the yellow mud, far

below. The car hit the farther bank—and reared back—and turned turtle—and we got pinned between it and what was left of the bridge.

"When I opened my eyes again, it was very quiet. I turned my head and found the blood running into my eyes, and when I'd wiped it away with my sleeve, I saw the little boy's hand, lying still. It looked awfully small and lonesome—and sort of empty, his hand. I was half under the car; and because of my leg, and the blood trickling in my eyes, and my chest hurting very much, I was some time getting at him. And he was dead. Hughie was dead—and he'd been laughing—After a while I got to her. The tide was beginning to come in, and I had to get them both up the bank.

"It took me a long time. I don't know how long. No, nor how I did it. But after a while, the three of us were up. And she opened her eyes. But when I tried to move her again, she screamed. Twice she screamed, and fell to moaning.

"After a bit, she asked for the child, and I had to tell her. There was something in her eyes one didn't like to lie to. She made me put him beside her, and she dropped her hand on his head.

"'Amos,' she said, in a sort of whisper, 'Amos, friend, I'm not sorry my little boy is dead. He—he frightened me at times, Amos. And—his hair was *kinky*. But, oh, because he is dead and and I have to be glad of it, I am glad, glad, glad to lie here and die, too! For I'm going. My back's broken, Amos.'

"I howled like a dog at that. What with blood and mud and crying, I must have been a fearsome thing for her to look at. But she didn't seem to think so.

"'Don't you remember,' said she, 'how Daphne used to put her head on your knees when she was sleepy and bedtime was near? Lift my head to

your knees now, Amos. For I will end things where I began them.'

"I wiped off some of the mud and blood, so I wouldn't be so horrible to see. I groaned with my anguish over her. I lifted her head to my knees as she'd told me to, and her long hair fell on either side of her. It was so bright you'd think it was something alive and happy by itself, shining in the sun. But the shadow was on her face already, and I began to choke out the Psalm the church says we are to say in an hour like that: 'Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee.'

"She couldn't move, but she looked up at me and smiled.

"'Oh, when all's said and done, Amos, I'm not sorry. It's been such a gallant game, and I took my chance and won. This isn't the worst that could have happened, old friend. I'm going—at high tide. Before ever I was tired, before the golden bowl was broken, or the silver chain was loosed—'"

"The thought of her going crazed me. I began to cry aloud:

"If only I could die for you, Daphne! Don't you know I'd die a million deaths to save you? Daphne! God is cruel! God is cruel!"

"'God's good,' she said. 'Why, you lived for me, Amos. Anybody can die—it's so soon over and done with! But living—that's the test. Now, my true, true, loving, loyal friend, you must live to do one last thing for me. You must tell Hugh I say he is to go on and go on and go on; that he must do alone the things we planned to do together; that he can't fail without being false to our little boy and me. And—you must tell John Hemingway—everything. And at the end, Amos, tell him I know he will understand.'

"She didn't speak any more at all. After a while, I put her head off my knees and spread her bright hair over her face—and left her with one hand on the child's hair.

"And I began to crawl—and I kept on crawling—and falling—and crawling. I prayed to hold out—and you came—and—"

And that was all.



TRIOLET

A ROSE bloomed on a withered cheek—
Behind the wrinkled mask, a maiden!
For just an instant did she peek.
A rose bloomed on a withered cheek—
And as I would her joyance seek,
She fled, and left a crone, grief-laden.
A rose bloomed on a withered cheek—
Behind the wrinkled mask, a maiden!

D. E. WHEELER.



Nix on the Slaughter

By Allen Sangree

Author of "The Big Hop," "A Time Exposure," etc.

LIKE most children of a certain age, the immediate progeny of Sigmund House at times inquired of their father concerning the family's lineage, its forbears, where established, whence transplanted. It was a matter of real vexation to some of them, especially the older ones, that Mr. House either would not or could not give any particulars. The fact that he spoke German fluently and insisted on the whole family doing likewise, even his wife, who was of Scotch-Irish extraction, argued that the Houses were of Teuton origin. Sigmund House did not deny this. Frequently he was lifted into flights of lavish praise for that sturdy nation, and you may believe there was scant neutrality in that domicile; in its bosom, at least.

Saving this sentiment, however, and many would think it pardonable, the House family was as loyally American as one could find in a week's journey. Sigmund House, indeed, one of the first to volunteer in the Spanish War, although he was near the age limit, had been moved to threaten his son Reginald with physical punishment for declaring himself to be a German-American.

"You're plain American," the father rebuked vehemently, "and don't you ever forget it! Why, your Uncle Wilhelm fought with Siegel! He died for his country at Chancellorsville——"

The attention of the family group, young and old, suddenly riveted upon him, urged Mr. House to cease abruptly as he evaded their hungry looks of inquiry, biting his nether lip in confusion. Reginald, a college youth of vast spirit, alone dared to pursue the tabooed subject, fleering boldly:

"That's the first time I ever heard we had an uncle in the Civil War. What happened to him? Was he shot in the back for deserting?"

"What!" vociferated House, senior, with horrified gesture. "A Schlach—a House desert! You miserable whelp!"

His chest heaved in terrible anger, his round gray eyes almost popped from their sockets. The insult cut him so sharply that he was for the moment a palsied and pathetic object, and Violet, a chestnut-haired, winsome girl of seventeen, interposed:

"Oh, father, Rex didn't mean that—really he didn't!"

"I don't know about that," maintained the other remorselessly. "If that isn't the mystery, what is it? Other people can tell who they are and where they came from. Look at mother."

Mrs. House entered just then, and with a woman's intuition, took in the situation. Though strong-minded enough, she was one to avoid a disturbance, so she held up an assuaging hand. But Reggie was aroused.

"We know all about mother. She

was a Galbraith, and they were Scotch Covenanters. Captain John Galbraith fought under Washington. No trouble tracing mother's folks," he challenged. "The girls could get into the Daughters of the Revolution's far as mother's concerned."

Young Reginald reckoned upon thus enlisting the sympathy of his sister, and continued hotly:

"Mystery! Everything's a mystery about this family!"

"Reginald, hush!" championed his mother. "I won't have you talking to your father in this way. Who has paid for your education, I'd like to know. Simply because you're getting into society, you're making all this trouble. Why can't you be satisfied? Your father's name is as much respected in this town as the President of the United States. Oh, why do we have such miserable rows over nothing?"

Mrs. House sank down on the sofa in tears and, as the children all loved her devotedly, Reginald now stood alone in majestic martyrdom.

The dark and annoying chapter was interrupted by the advent of one of the oldest daughters and her husband, Doctor Horatio Bull. The other "oldest daughter," a twin sister, had been married simultaneously to a young architect, Mr. Charlton Yard, a duplex "havoc of love," as the local society editor termed it, that had been epochal to the House family.

With all the pride and triumph of a young mother, Mrs. Bull announced in one breath that they had decided to have a double christening, Mrs. Yard, too, being the elated possessor of a baby boy. While it was not to be so elaborate an affair as the marriage fête, they counted on a full family attendance and a celebration worthy of the rare occasion. While Mrs. Bull finished outlining the program, and while her husband, a thoughtful man who aimed

at biological fame, fell to studying the evolutions of a spotted goldfish that whirled in a jar by the window, the House skeleton no longer rattled. Mrs. Yard, too, dark of hair, tall, queenly, emphatic, swept into the gathering, and in this happy hubbub, House, senior, and junior, sullenly retired.

What were the former's thoughts as he stepped along the familiar street to his office, Reginald, striding rapidly in the opposite direction, might not guess. He was bound to the city library, where he spent a long time to small benefit, delving into the genealogy of the name "House." It seemed incumbent upon him to find a pedigree for his family, now that the twins had married so well. And, moreover, he had himself to consider.

Meanwhile, his father plodded along with so perplexed a mien and a brow so furrowed that his many friends hardly recognized the genial Sigmund House. Likely enough the unhappy man was meditating that his prime drawback in life had been a zeal to accumulate money quickly, this for the sole advantage of his six children. Primarily, he was a man who loved and admired his own family. He had made bitter sacrifices without complaining, and unknown to any but his loyal wife. In no sense a Micawber, for he was the soul of industry, nevertheless he ever looked to each enterprise to bring him a "clean-up." Losing more often than gaining, he managed somehow to maintain a firm front, and—his one great consolation—the family thus far had wanted for nothing.

But where, now, was the balm in Gilead? His last venture in a liquid-air machine had wiped out his entire capital, and there remained only to mortgage the very house in which the family had lived for nearly twenty-five years. Little wonder that the poor man had given vent to his feelings so explosively or that he should stoop along

the streets like one condemned where he had been wont to walk erectly.

When prosperous home owners cheerily sprayed their lawns, when the aroma of roses and honeysuckle suffused the air—that is to say, in the decline of a July afternoon—Sigmund House returned home, hot, gloomy, wretched, and in no mood to be badgered. Distraught as he was, he sensed a strange tension in the dining room, most pronounced in young Reginald, who had the pose of Elijah reproving Ahab. Seeking his accustomed place at the table, Mr. House, there by the plate, discovered the cause.

Though he had contrived for many years to shroud the family skeleton, Sigmund House was no dissembler by nature, and so it was that he groaned aloud as he stared at a foreign envelope with its quaint script. Even Thomas Chalmers, the twelve-year-old *enfant terrible*, paused with a segment of steak midway to his red lips at the obvious tragedy. There was utter silence until Mrs. House asked fearfully:

"Can it be bad news, Sigmund dear?"

Mr. House, limp, dazed, feebly operated a silver knife through the envelope, and while he read, five pairs of eyes never left his countenance.

"It's from Germany, ain't it, pop?" put forth the brazen Thomas Chalmers, deflected momentarily from the sea of gravy and tiny oasis of steak before him. "Gee, he ought t' get a typewriter!"

"Amsterdam's not in Germany," corrected Violet, with a vague hope of calming troubled waters. "It's the metropolis of Holland, just like New York is in this country."

"Anyhow, they can't send mail out of Germany now, can they, father?" voiced the baby of the home, Rose, a maid of ten who well bore out her name.

"Holland—yes, Holland, that's where it's from," answered the worried Sig-

mund, with a look of appeal at Mrs. House. Then, with feigned complacency: "Well, children, we'll have to make room for one more. This letter's from my granduncle, Ludwig. He's on his way to America, and," he added hollowly, "he says he wants to live with us, Elisabeth."

"Goodness alive!" exclaimed Mrs. House in great alarm. "I don't know where in the world I can put him! We're all doubled up now."

"It surely never rains but it pours," remarked Mr. House with a distressed, meaning glance at his wife. "I thought he was dead long ago. He was my grandfather's brother. He never married, and, besides us, he must be the only one of our na—our family alive. There was Wilhelm and myself. Poor Wilhelm, I told you, died at Chancellorsville."

"One thing," encouraged Thomas Chalmers. "We'll get something straight about that war now. S'pose he ever saw a battle, pop?"

Mr. House, more at ease, went on to relate the salient features of his emigration to America, though he still evaded the smileless, avid inquiry of Reginald, who said never a word until his father started to leave the table. Reaching over then, he snatched up the crumpled envelope and loudly charged:

"So that's the mystery?" He brandished the telltale address. Sigmund Schlachthaus! That's who we are! Do you get it?" he invoked with a sort of shriek. "Schlachthaus—that's our name!" He spelled it out with damning emphasis, and with an awful grin interpreted: "Slaughterhouse!"

Crimson with anger and shame, Sigmund House was a picture of guilt, reflected less vividly in his wife. Twice he opened his dry lips to speak, but could not. Reginald, posed like a statue of vengeance, again demanded the truth, so offensively that Thomas Chalmers braved him.

"Well, what of it?" he bristled, squeezing his mother's hand protectingly. "That ain't any worse than Hoggmire—'Skinny' Hoggmire 'cross the way—er 'Stuffy' Hellbore, 'at lives up Vernon Street!"

A peal of laughter from Miss Violet, as she swayed to a window seat, diverted the inexorable Reginald. Perhaps he, too, was thinking of the grotesque combination.

"Slaughterhouse!" gasped the lovely girl. "Violet Slaughterhouse! Oh! Oh!"

Her mirth, which, however, had something of horror in it, presently infected them all, even Reginald deigning to smile wryly. Mr. House, at first incensed, grim, finally thawed somewhat and breathed his relief, though he could not suppress a note of irony.

"So, your royal highness, that's the mystery, and I hope to blazes you have enough sense to keep it as quiet as I have!"

While they listened closely, he told what he knew of the first Schlachthaus, namely, a doughty warrior who had earned the title of chevalier in the brawny days of the Palatinate. Another had distinguished himself in the Seven Years' War under Frederick the Great. In brief, the name, while not common in the Fatherland, was one to be proud of, though embarrassing to Sigmund and his brother when they had settled in America.

"There was no one left of the name," explained Mr. House, "except this old Uncle Ludwig, whom I never saw, and so Wilhelm and I just lopped off the 'Schlacht' and, as you might say, started all over again. I never expected anything like this to turn up."

He studied the letter gravely and contributed his part to the general speculation on Uncle Ludwig. He reckoned that the ancient relative must be over eighty years of age, and drowned

in his own desperate cares, gave him slight consideration.

But to Mrs. House and the four children, not to mention the married daughters, the contemplated burden was a topic of lively conversation. That Uncle Ludwig would be practically helpless and poverty-stricken was taken for granted, yet no one thought of being otherwise than hospitable to him. It was settled that the small back room occupied by Thomas Chalmers should be assigned to the venerable guest, Reginald thus being compelled to share his quarters with the family demon. This was a severe trial, but Reginald resigned himself to it. Indeed, the older son appeared to be going through a process of chastening, owing, maybe, to certain hints dropped by his mother.

Sacrificing prospective happy hours at the country club, to which he had been elected through the influence of his brothers-in-law, Reginald approached his father awkwardly next morning and suggested that he get some employment for the summer months to help in his schooling. Sigmund House, care bent, gloomy, took the offer gratefully, and without more ado confessed the limits of his financial plight. The youth could not help being shocked and depressed; it was so much worse than he had had any notion of.

"Well, that's the situation, son," sighed Mr. House heavily. "Unless something turns up while we're living on our mortgage, I don't know—I can't see my way clear."

He paused at the rumble of a vehicle, which halted outside, and his leaden eye followed Violet, who skipped back from the window to announce with whimsical ceremony:

"My lord, the carriage awaits. I fancy it is our esteemed great-granduncle."

Instantly, Reginald made for the door, Mr. House following more slowly, yet glad of the interruption;

while upstairs Mrs. House, discreet matron, straightway decided to double up Thomas Chalmers and Reginald in the former's room. If luggage of bright, solid leather be any criterion, then Uncle Ludwig was no pauper. Neither did the visitor appear decrepit as he sprang out, savagely waved aside the driver, and himself gripped a heavy dispatch box.

Turning to his relatives, he disclosed a countenance alert, shrewd, and strangely animated, with small brown eyes glittering from under thick black brows. His cheeks, wrinkled, but russet, betokened an active liver. His bald forehead, shifting, probing eyes, and sardonic expression, reminded one of that archskeptic, Voltaire. Instead of consecutive words, he employed a cluck or a chuckle, which emanated from somewhere in the interior of his small head, and he had a habit of pursing his lips to the left side, squinting at the same time. He spoke English well enough, but mingled it plentifully with the language of the Fatherland. His clothes were neat and expensive, and one detected an atmosphere of opulence about him. "Queer" was the word Reginald and Violet used to describe him, an expression, to be sure, as latitudinous as charity.

One thing Uncle Ludwig was most solicitous of—the strong dispatch box—and he was more furtive than usual until it had been securely locked in a safe-deposit vault. So impressive was this parcel that by the end of the day but one notion prevailed.

"What's the old geezer like?" questioned Thomas Chalmers, entering just in time for dinner, as was his wont.

"Rich," whispered Rose in awed tones. "He's rich as anything."

"He is, eh?" gloated Thomas. "I wonder if I can soak him f'r a new baseball."

"Thomas, hush!" admonished his

mother anxiously. "Do try to be a little gentleman for my sake!"

Thomas Chalmers, known in boyville nomenclature as "the Biffer," was not at all cowed at the introduction, and Uncle Ludwig swept over his rugged frame an admiring appraisement.

"Some war you're puttin' up over there," complimented the urchin feelingly. "Say, I can speak German, too."

Uncle Ludwig tittered and grimaced.

"Quite a boy, quite a boy!" he cackled in his high falsetto, and the family prayed as one that Thomas Chalmers would leave well enough alone.

Now, although there was nothing in Uncle Ludwig's talk or actions to bear out the presentment of affluence, yet so firmly convinced were the Houses that Mrs. Yard, signaling Mrs. Bull aside that very evening, proposed that he be chosen for godfather at the double christening of the morrow. This was a shift that might require some tact, since Judge Bull had rather counted upon the honor, and his was not a personality to flout. Mrs. Yard promised to undertake this task, and her sister was indifferent.

"I never heard of any godfather doing anything for anybody, anyway," was her comment.

"My dear," whispered Mrs. Yard, who was of more aggressive type, "think of the safe-deposit vault! Father says the old gentleman handled that box as if it might be worth a million dollars. And he was with a lawyer for two hours to-day."

"Don't be absurd, Marion! Upon my word, I think the family's gone quite dippy over this! A million dollars! A million cents, more likely!"

However, as it had always been, the black-haired twin prevailed over the other, whose lurid red locks had been bequeathed to her baby boy, and she acquiesced with: "Goodness knows, if there is any money coming, we certainly

need it!" Mr. Milton Yard, her father-in-law, had never been a conspicuous money getter, retiring early to a modest estate that had descended from several generations. His son had inherited an artistic temperament and employed it zealously in architecture, though he was now only by way of winning a foothold.

The Bulls, on the contrary, were reputed to be "well fixed," albeit no one had a keener desire for earthly increment than Judge Stilton Bull, retired from the bench. It had been a sharp disappointment to him when his only son had wedded into the House family.

"It's just as easy to marry a nice rich girl as a nice poor one," he had always maintained. But Horatio did not seem to regret his choice.

In family gatherings, the judge, as might be expected, was protagonist, and with egotistic good humor and oratorical pomp, he strode the veranda of his son's bungalow, in the early evening hour, having resigned the godfathership with good grace.

"What do you make of it, Yard, eh?" he bantered, chest out and sniffing the flowery breezes. "Marion says the old codger's rich. Funny enough if money finally came out of these unions!"

"Stranger things have happened," gently answered Mr. Yard, immersed in an art magazine.

"I suppose so," admitted the judge; then with a snort: "In 'The Arabian Nights'!"

Inside the cozy reception room, other members of the Bull and Yard families hovered over the two baskets, with their infant occupants, the patter of "baby talk" being audible above the dialogue of the Reverend Mr. Honeywell and Mr. Robert Gore. The latter was to be considered as in the relationship, for his engagement to Miss Violet was soon to be announced; another link in the House social chain, since he was the son of a congressman.

To this young gentleman, whose loving eyes traveled from the infant prodigies to the sweet girl fondling them, there was evidently an exceptional significance in the ceremony; and Mr. Honeywell, appreciating his abstraction, took the moment to study the names selected —Stilton Pomeroy Bull and Abbingdon Spurgeon Yard. He was in the midst of memorizing them, for, being a timid man, he disliked any sort of hitch, when the Sigmund Houses arrived.

To the aged foreigner, Judge Bull gave a right eager handclasp, accompanying it with flattering speeches of welcome, and Uncle Ludwig, his bright, inquisitive eyes shooting around, over, and through the group, clucked his gratitude. True, the mothers were provoked when his crooked, knotted finger prodded the diminutive black-haired Yard and the more lusty red-haired Bull with the professional discretion of a judge at a bench show. But when he gave it as his opinion that both were superlative creatures, the two fond mothers again beamed sweetly at him, and it seemed as if a universal chord of harmony twanged through the room.

However, when Mr. Honeywell approached the moment of actual christening, it might have been noticed that Uncle Ludwig's lips twitched peculiarly, that his hands jerked nervously, that some strong emotion convulsed him. Holding him who was soon to be Stilton Pomeroy Bull in a none-too-comfortable clutch, Mr. Honeywell was about to lay his moistened palm upon the wriggling crimson disk when Uncle Ludwig, in a small, but peremptory, voice commanded:

"Wait! I should ask what is his name."

After a shocked silence, it was told him by father and mother and emphasized by Judge Bull, who further explained that the two names were of his distinguished family.

Uncle Ludwig heard him out, but

with a tightening of the jaws and a cold glare.

"If I am godfather," he said firmly, "I should have something to say."

At this, the subject of debate set up such a wail and squirmed so vigorously that the Reverend Mr. Honeywell nearly let him drop. Blushing furiously, the miserable man gratefully gave him over to his mother, while Judge Bull cautiously made concessions.

"May I ask, sir"—he restrained his temper—"what you would suggest?"

Uncle Ludwig fortified himself with a full breath and then bespoke:

"Why, my name—our name—our family name—Schlachthaus, or, as you say in America, Slaughterhouse!"

"Do you mean to say," stammered the judge, "that Slag—Slaug—or whatever the devil you call it, is the name of these—"

Respiring painfully through distended nostrils, he flung a contemptuous gesture at the cowering Sigmund.

"*Natürlich!*" snapped Uncle Ludwig. "What is the matter with it? Our name is as honorable as yours, I would have you know, though my nephew doesn't seem to think so."

Judge Bull, his cheeks ashen with amazement and rage, managed to splutter:

"But—but you don't mean to suggest that this innocent babe, my grandson, is to be blasphemed with the name of—of"—his voice fairly rattled the furniture—"Slaughterhouse?"

Uncle Ludwig could not help blinking at this tornado, yet he shrugged his wizened shoulders doggedly, as if to say, "Take it or leave it." Turning upon his outraged relatives with all the courage of Daniel among the desperate beasts, he paused to cast this bomb:

"Well, as you please, but I would give him two million dollars. That's my intention—two millions for each." He included the sleeping Yard infant.

The judge, in a community where he was respected and feared, had never hesitated to speak his mind, but now, when he could recover his voice, he checked himself with an appalling effort. His trained acumen discerned the genuine.

"Uncle Ludwig, if you will permit me," he moderated, "I believe that I appreciate your attitude and can sympathize with it."

"Ja?" with grim doubt.

"Quite so. Here you are, venerable representative of an honorable name. You come to this fair land out of the goodness of your heart, in order that your kinfolk may share in—in—"

"Thirty millions," said the old man, laughing outright at the speechless group. "That's what I have. Bavarian zinc mines. I transferred my holdings; they're in American bonds now. You may see the certificates if you wish."

He tapped his small boot on the polished floor and chuckled from the inside of his head. The judge being unable to find words immediately, his jaw relaxing as if it might never again close up, the other went on:

"As you say, I came here to give away my fortune and to see that our name is perpetuated. I found the name—despised." He darted a threatening look at Sigmund House. "You're a lawyer, aren't you? So! This is not a thing for argument. Here you see a paper drawn up by a lawyer to-day." He twitched the document from his pocket. "You call the babies my name, 'Slaughterhouse,' and I sign for them two millions each."

"But my friend—my dear friend Slag—Slug—Uncle Ludwig," besought the judge, with such eloquence as none there had ever heard, "you don't know what you're doing! Consider, I beg of you, consider! You could not, as a Christian, a human being, you could not fasten upon this innocent child, not to speak of this little Yard, or—"

He sought wildly for young Mr. Gore, but that unhappy youth had faded away and was seen distractedly tramping the lawn. At this moment, the demoralized Mr. Honeywell upset the christening font to the floor; whereupon both cherubs set up such piercing wails that nothing else could be heard.

"Mother's precious! Muzzer's pes-hus!" cooed Mrs. Bull, cuddling the red-haired prodigy and glaring relentless defiance at the Teuton ogre.

"Tum to oor muzzy-wuzzy!" murmured the stately Mrs. Yard, her active brain throbbing with air castles.

"Some name, that!" grinned Thomas Chalmers, seizing the moment to pluck the red-thatched infant's toe. "Slaughterhouse Bull!"

His brother Reginald, who had been transfixed during the amazing incident, cuffed him and, together with Messrs. Bull and Yard, he was propelled to the veranda, where Judge Bull clung to Uncle Ludwig's attenuated shoulder like a mastiff to a juicy sparerib.

Unstrung by the general tumult and his own fervor, Uncle Schlachthaus backed against the veranda railing, held at bay, to all appearances, while heavy artillery assailed him from every direction, even the mild Mr. Yard joining in. His protest at the odium of being "hyphenated" was so melodramatic that Uncle Ludwig evidently understood it to mean some species of surgical operation. Taking the cue, Judge Bull set him straight and then ardently elaborated on the evil.

When his arguments fell upon sterile ground, another—one more nearly concerned—added his dissent. Of medium, but powerful, figure, concise in manner, yet forceful, time had been—and not long ago—when Doctor Horatio Bull had been of national prominence as an All-America full back. His first impulse had been to toss Mr. Schlachthaus over the hedge, an easy feat for him. Very likely he recalled that his

own surname had been a subject for jest in the athletic world. Well he knew that his progeny, with this handicap, might expect the briefest consideration from any referee, however liberal.

At the same time, Doctor Bull was intensely human. Wealth opened to him a rare vista of opportunity; so he tempered his usual direct manner with a smile, pointing out:

"I say, Uncle Ludwig, I don't think you figure on what happens when you hook up these names. Now Slaughterhouse would sound all right with something else, but Slaughterhouse Bull!"

"Never!" shrilled the child's mother, as she stood in the doorway gripping the infant, her blue eyes ablaze, her fair cheeks quite livid. "Never!" And the defiance was echoed by a piercing squall.

"That's the point." The judge's voice prevailed. "You see, Uncle Ludwig, if our name were Smith or Jones, why, S-S-Slaughterhouse wouldn't be so bad. And here's Mr. Yard, too, and holy Heaven, sir, you must remember Mr. Gore, a prospective member of the family."

Uncle Ludwig was bewildered and offended.

"Gore?"

"Blood!" The judge blared it in the old gentleman's ear and took a firmer grip on his shoulder. "Blood! That's practically what it means. You see, that's it, my friend. If you only understood English better—"

Mr. Schlachthaus interrupted this tactless remark with a strong exclamation. His temper was exhausted and, wriggling himself loose from the judge, he challenged in high-pitched disgust:

"Such names! 'Bull' and 'Blood!' And you complain of 'Slaughterhouse!' I quit you! I finish! Ach!"

His short, shaky legs pegged down the gravel walk with surprising speed, his head bobbed determinedly, and

partly understood execrations in the mother tongue reached the combined families who watched him, confounded. Judge Bull glared over them, gnawing his gray mustache in keenest agony. His eye blamed every one, especially the two helpless infants, and finally rested upon the vanishing Schlachthaus.

"Thirty millions!" he groaned. "We'll get that if we have to clap him in the asylum!" Noting the shocked expression of Mr. Honeywell, he essayed a smile, though a grisly and guilty one. "A joke, my dear fellow—only a joke."

Sigmund House, in this dilemma, perspiration cascading down his tortured lineaments, wavered on the last step among varied dictates. He looked up to his clear-sighted wife, but she, too, was staggered for resolution, Scotch thrift balancing against pride. It was their son, Thomas Chalmers, seen down near the trolley line, under a strong electric glare, dribbling with his foot a toad as listless as himself of serious conceits, who saved them a decision. When Thomas had helped Uncle Ludwig to board a car and had followed him, the three families returned to a conference at once melancholy and exhilarating.

No one doubted the sincerity of this superannuated Mephistopheles, incredible as it seemed. For some moments each found relief in a stunned "Thirty millions!" peering at the others like a person unnerved by an earthquake. This, in turn, gave way to exaggerated merriment, which presently subsided into more or less serious discussion. Doctor Bull was inclined to be jocular, thwacking Charlton Yard with a full-back thump.

"You're getting off easy, old boy—Slaughterhouse Yard. Why, there's something classical about that. But this poor little duffer!" He chuckled his baby boy. "Murder! How would this

sound, Kate: 'Slaughterhouse Bull made hash out of the Princeton line, horning through for a fifty-yard gain?'"

"Horatio, don't! It's too dreadful to think of!" cried Mrs. Bull, but the doctor was irrepressible. "And Slaughterhouse Gore!" he saluted uproariously. "I believe you've got something on us, Bob."

Mr. Gore blushed to the roots of his hair, his expression hinting at indecision. The elder Mr. Yard, with a considerate eye for the now shrinking Violet, offered several cheerful suggestions, among them a possible abbreviation; "Slotty," for example. Whereupon, Reginald debouched from his wounded silence:

"Oh, what's the use? You couldn't cover up that name. Doctor, you don't mean that you'd stand for such a disgrace, do you? Well, I won't, I tell you! Everybody'll know we did it for his dirty money. That's what I say to all of you."

The judge reminded Reginald that he was very young and knew less about money, life, and hard work than a rabbit.

"Just hold your horses, will you?" he commanded. "I'm sure we can make a compromise. There's some way out of it. Only wait, folks. Patience. Give me a little time. Thirty millions! Think of it! Think of it!"

Before separating, he claimed from each one, including the Reverend Mr. Honeywell, a solemn pledge of secrecy.

For various reasons, this caution was superfluous, since in all history rarely has it been possible completely to bury a supreme, crowning tragedy. Judge Bull himself was most reprehensible, disclosing the scandal to several law friends in the hearing of a clerk. When Mr. Schlachthaus, lured to this conference, closed every loophole of compromise, the judge waxed vicious, making a flying trip to consult a noted alienist. At the same time, he warned Sigmund

and his family to leave no effort untried for conciliating the ancient Midas, which was easier said than done.

The high-spirited Reginald could not bring himself to bend one iota; true to his promise, plunging into a newspaper job, where he speedily learned that the ghastly story had been bruited town-wide. Ordered to rewrite a war dispatch describing how a German regiment had made a veritable "slaughterhouse" of a certain French position, his sensitive hand deftly changed the abominated word to "shambles." But the city editor did not like it.

"When you strike a good Anglo-Saxon word," he bellowed across the room, "let her stand. What's the matter with 'slaughterhouse'?"

The timely jest wrenched a grin even from a dyspeptic proof reader, and the wretched youth could not summon nerve to reply.

Violet, after one loathsome experience, took to remaining indoors along with her mother and father, though the weather was torrid. The married sisters made their calls only by night, and behind darkened windows, as in a house of mourning, whispered the subject with stifled breath. Once Mrs. Yard bearded the lion in his den to make, on her own initiative, what she thought a sensible concession.

"Uncle Ludwig," she ingratiated, "would you be satisfied if we called ourselves 'Schlachthaus?' That's the original name, and I should think you'd prefer it."

"Shame! Shame!" broke out the old fellow bitterly. "You're ashamed of it! You know it! 'Bull' and 'Blood'—ach!"

He slammed the door in her face, and down below the family trembled, while thirty millions in squeaky boots paced the floor above.

Crabbed, morose, Uncle Schlachthaus held himself severely aloof, excepting to show a fondness for the so-

cietry of Thomas Chalmers, whom he would accompany to the river front and watch by the hour, pleased, evidently, by his athletic prowess. This intimacy did not escape the family, and after dinner one evening, when the octogenarian had retired to his room, Mrs. House, first tactfully helping Thomas to another piece of green-apple pie, ventured diffidently:

"Does Uncle Ludwig ever say anything about—about things?"

"He made a crack to-day," was Thomas' muffled, but startling, reply. Mr. House continued to stare at the evening paper, but with both ears cocked. "He asked me," resumed Thomas, with exasperating leisure, "if I'd stand for the name of Slaughter-souse."

There was an audible gulp from Reginald, who leaped from the window seat with:

"What d'you say?"

"I told him sure. Told him he could call me 'Beef Trust,' if he wanted to. An' he's goin' to get me a canoe. Ah, boy, one o' those fifty-dollar 'cedars!' He smacked his lips at the dimpled, admiring Rose. "Say, pop, what is it about this hyphen stuff?"

Thomas ran a vacuum touch over the pie plate and, bored by the compact of an excited explanation from his father and Reginald, silenced them in masterful fashion.

"Well, Uncle Ludwig can't see it. He says there's as many Germans in this country as Americans. There's no use talkin' to him. An' the way I look at it, somebody's got to be the goat. That's what I told Uncle Ludwig, an'" —he straightened up in his chair—"I guess it might as well be me. If you'd hear him talk, it ain't so bad. He says it's better'n the name 'Hoggmire,' an' Mr. Hoggmire's a high-school principal. I c'n be Slaughterhouse and the rest o' you keep out of it." As the Biffer's body rose, so did his soul, un-

til he stood transfigured. "And don't worry, any of you." He scattered a beneficent gesture. "I'll split up every-thing I get."

So acute and oppressive had been the tension that Mrs. House fairly gave way, sobbing, with her arms around the strong young neck.

"Oh, my darling boy, I always said you were the most generous one in the family!"

"You did, Elisabeth," agreed Mr. House, tremulous with emotion.

Only Reginald failed to unbend, but the Biffer was generous.

"You want to know all about it, eh? Well, there's nothin' to tell, yet. He's warmin' up; that's good enough. An' say, mom, he likes that smoked sausage an' sassafras tea. You want to give him plenty of it. He's goin' to a lawyer to-morrow, an' I guess there'll be something doing before night. He acts that way."

Next morning the House family sat through breakfast in a dense vapor of smoked-sausage and sassafras, overwrought, self-conscious, and so mindful of Uncle Ludwig's every quirk, grimace, and gesture that one or two dishes were capsized, and Reginald, in his ardor to pass the brown bread, nearly dragged off the tablecloth. The object of their solicitude did not reciprocate, but his industrious clucking indicated a mellower humor than usual, and when he departed, leaning on Thomas Chalmers' shoulder, Sigmund House, pressing his wife's hand, followed them with glistening eye to the turn of the street.

Here, martyr, mainstay of a foundering ship, the Biffer, as he disappeared, turned to hoist a signal of good cheer, though this he was far from feeling. On a terrace some distance off, fronting a vacant lot used for a ball ground, he had already descried a row of hostile, malicious faces, most of which,

unhappily, had at one time or other encountered his freckled fist. His reputation, thus far, had checked the long-expected attack, but at the sight of half a dozen allies banded together, a lump clogged his throat and a burning sensation contracted his bosom.

"I guess, uncle, I'll be goin' down this way, to the river," he mumbled. "You'll know where to find me. So long."

In full view of the enemy, he waited for Uncle Ludwig to approach their gauntlet.

The opening insult, an imitation of several dying calves, was rather timid, followed by a more vociferous bleating of sheep under the executioner's hand, omens intelligible enough to the anxious Thomas. When Mr. Schlachthaus, quite deaf in one ear, gave no heed, continuing on his way, Stuffy Hellbore scooted down to the pavement and with hands to his mouth assailed:

"Oh, you Slaughterhouse! Moo-o-o! Moo-o-o! Slaughterhouse!"

Whereupon, the old gentleman, with a most friendly smile, accepted the recognition:

"Good morning, children."

A few pedestrians, tongue in cheek, paused undecided, but the ruthless urchins were not deterred, inspired, no doubt, by the trembling figure of the Biffer. Uncle Ludwig may have sensed the affront by this time, for he walked faster, his head down, and Thomas Chalmers, stricken, suddenly raced nearer to appeal:

"Hey, Stuffy, don't, don't! It's me grandpop!"

But this only inflamed them.

"Big Slaughterhouse—little Slaughterhouse! Moo-o-o! Baa-a-a! Fresh beef for sale!" The shrill chorus pierced every nook and cranny in the neighborhood. Heads popped out of windows; a milk-wagon driver pulled up to point out to a groceryman the retreating foreigner.

"Kiddin' the life out o' that old guy. His name's Slaughterhouse. What d'y'e know about that?"

And now the Biffer hesitated no longer. Dispelling with the heel of his fist the red-hot tears that cluttered his long lashes, he descended upon the enemy, bearing down three with the first onset. Into the mêlée that ensued the Marquis of Queensbury himself would not have intruded, and indeed it seemed hardly necessary, for the Biffer was more than holding his own, the Hellbore-Hoggmire defense suffering, in particular. One citizen, in half-hearted manner, was about to respond to feminine protests, gingerly flanking the squirming mass of arms and legs, when the Biffer suddenly emerged, making another rush for the weedy, but agile, Hellbore. This lad, in an excess of fear, having seized a ball bat, swung it so deftly on Thomas Chalmers' nose and brow that it looked for a time as if real tragedy had been enacted.

Before Uncle Ludwig could reach the crimson arena, rough, but gentle, hands were bearing the defeated champion to his home, and the old gentleman, jostled by the crowd, was so shaken that he, too, had to be put to bed. When Mrs. House, cool and efficient in catastrophe, entered later on, he was sitting up, both hands over his face, greatly agitated. At his request, she helped him into the dingy back room where the youngest and last scion of Schlacht-haus lay swathed in bandages and plasters. Only one eye, though a bright one, was visible, and the absence of two important teeth interfered with his speech.

The old man shuddered as he stretched forth a trembling hand to make sundry pats and taps on the pillow. By all tokens, he was suffering more than the boy, and Mrs. House, gently closing the door, went out. Tottering across the room, Uncle Ludwig fussily arranged the window shade. Then, seating himself closer to the wounded form, he asked:

"The school professor, Thomas, will to-morrow punish those ruffians as they deserve?"

"No; no chance," came from the swollen lips. "I'll have to tend to that myself."

Uncle Ludwig uttered queer, pained noises, his mouth twisted almost around to his ear.

"I am sorry. This I do not like," he said ruefully, gravely.

"That's a name," assured Thomas, spitting some blood from his distorted mouth, "that'll always get you a battle, believe me!"

Uncle Ludwig groaned.

"Ach, that I do not want!" He spoke harshly, feelingly. "No; no more battles!"

He got up, and the family, crouching anxiously down below, heard his squeaky boots pacing the floor a long time. When at last they retreated, Mrs. House stole upstairs with a bowl of savory rice soup, biding, with rare stoicism, until the Biffer had been partially gorged.

"Gee, that's fine!" he breathed blissfully. Then, in his own good time: "And say, mother, tell pop an' all of 'em not to worry. Uncle Ludy says it's nix on the Slaughter."





Holding the Mirror Up to Art

By Walter Prichard Eaton

Author of "Marrying Samuel," "The Man Who Found Christmas," etc.

IT was one of "life's little ironies" that Millicent Hope—her real name was Bessie Jones, but she had forgotten that—should wake to consciousness and find herself in much the same posture of circumstances her stage play had been based upon. It isn't often that Nature can so directly hold the mirror up to Art. Millicent looked deeply at what she saw reflected—and that is the story.

"Cynthia's Return" was the name of the play in which she had been appearing—at the head of the second company, for Millicent was young and had not yet attained stellar honors; though, to be sure, it isn't always necessary to possess mature experience to be a star actress nowadays! This drama, one of the numerous unacknowledged offspring of "Magda," depicted the return of a beautiful young actress to the New England village of her birth, where her spirit was cramped and confined, her sensibilities outraged by the Puritan narrowness, the mean gossip about herself and her profession, where the men were hypocrites and the women cats. In the end, of course, Cynthia returned to the great, free life of "the world"—meaning Broadway. And stupid, patient American audiences accepted this musical-comedy travesty on life as something worth paying

money to see. To be sure, Millicent was a picture in the part, and the pathetic little droop of her mouth when the gossip hurt her, or the ringing scorn of her voice when she unbared the hypocrisy of some bucolic Joseph Surface, were not to be resisted.

When the troupe reached a chain of industrial cities in New England, not many miles apart, and noted among actors for their uncomfortable hotels rather than for their vast cotton mills and factories, Millicent, her leading man, and one or two more of the company whose salaries were equal to the task, rented an automobile and took quarters at the peaceful old inn that looked across an elm-hung campus in the ancient academy town of Richmond, not far off. They were to play an aggregate of two weeks in the three cities, and Richmond was not more than fifteen miles from the farthest. It was a simple matter to get to the theater by motor after early dinner, and a pleasant run back through the night, over excellent roads. So, for the once, Millicent and the other troupers lived in comfort.

She saw nothing of the cities she was playing in, but that didn't trouble her. Actors travel more and see less than any other class of society, anyway. She did see something of Richmond, how-

ever. From her chamber window, when she rose at eleven, she looked across the road to a great expanse of campus lawn, and directly in front of her a wide path entered this lawn and stretched clear across it, overhung all the way by rows of magnificent elms, just now beginning to shed their yellowed leaves. On higher ground to the left, stood a row of the ancient academy buildings—the stone chapel, the old red brick dormitories, the central recitation hall with its bell that summoned every hour hundreds of boys who swarmed over the paths or cut hastily across the grass. In the distance were other, newer dormitories, gymnasiums, football fields; and on the wide main street, arched with splendid elms, stood ancient houses, foursquare and solid, some with the elegant dignity of Bulfinch's designing, and most of them once the homes of famous men, for Richmond and its great school had played its part in the history of our nation for more than a hundred years.

Millicent, to be sure, knew nothing about this history. But she did feel the charm of the old town high on its hill, and her young body responded to the opportunities for brisk walks into the surrounding pastoral country, and she liked to see the hundreds of "nice little boys," as she called them, who swarmed over the place. That they apparently liked to see her did not diminish her pleasure! The peculiar thud of a punted football came to be a kind of music to her that first peaceful week.

Then, during the second week, just after the chauffeur had turned down the steep hill from the inn, at a fast clip because they were late for the theater, something went wrong with the brake, and they side-swiped a dray coming up a blind cross street, and overturned. By some miracle—perhaps because they had swerved close to the grass bank of the road—no one was killed. The driver was taken to the

hospital with a broken leg; those in the tonneau were taken back to the inn and soon patched up. But Millicent, who had been riding on the front seat, either hit the wind shield in falling or something hard on the ground; for when she finally regained consciousness, she was lying in an unfamiliar chamber, her throbbing head swathed in bandages, her aching leg stretched out with a heavy weight, and bending over her were a nurse, a doctor, and a sweet-faced, gray-haired woman.

"I must get to the theater!" Millicent cried, in a dazed, weak voice.

"I don't believe I'd try just now," the doctor answered, and the woman smiled into the girl's bewildered eyes and shook her head.

"Where am I?" said Millicent.
The doctor spoke reassuringly.

"You had a little spill, but you are going to be all right now. You are in the kindest hands in Richmond. They belong to Mrs. Parke. Now go to sleep again and don't try to talk. We'll look after you."

The girl could only turn her eyes, but she tried as best she could to look about her. However, her eyes soon rested on those of the sweet old lady, and she felt somehow comforted and wearily let the lids droop again as the other woman's fingers patted hers.

As a matter of fact, it was nearly twenty hours after the accident. Millicent's unconscious form had been carried into Professor Parke's house, at Mrs. Parke's demand, and when the doctor had said, "A broken leg and possible concussion of the brain," that bustling and kind-hearted old lady had insisted that "the poor child" be kept right there. The manager of the play had hurried over with a nurse, and he was waiting to learn the fate of his leading woman, waiting in Professor Parke's big library, while that scholarly old gentleman discoursed pleasan-

antly to his deaf ears of the drama in ancient Greece.

The doctor came in.

"We can set her leg, now, after two or three days of absolute quiet," he said. "No, you can't see her. I think the danger is over. But it will be a month before she's out, and possibly longer before she can play again."

"Tough luck," said the manager. "Well, we'll have to beat it back to N'York and break in a new *Cynthia*. You got my address, professor. My firm ain't pikers. You send any and all bills right along to us. I guess Millicent'll thank you better'n I can do."

"We will do our best for the young lady," the professor answered. "A quaint character," he added to the doctor, after the manager had gone. "What is the derivation of 'piker,' I wonder?"

The next two days for Millicent were a fog of dazed suffering; she was still under the shock, like one beneath roaring water, with the awful weight dragging at her strapped leg. She was aware of little but occasional glimpses of the kindly face of Mrs. Parke bending over her, and invariably she tried to lift her hand, to be taken by the warm, soft, comforting fingers. Then her leg was set, her head cleared, she seemed suddenly to come up from under the waters; and, waking one morning, she looked about her chamber for the first time clearly.

It was unlike any chamber she had ever seen. Born in a mean city flat, one of eight children, entering a chorus at sixteen, and at twenty achieving the first luxury of her life—hotel suites and the gilded cafés of Broadway—Millicent knew only the extremes. Here was a spacious chamber with a pure white ceiling; between the recessed windows, a fireplace capped by an exquisite white mantel; and that in turn surmounted by a white panel which bore in the center a Piranesi print.

There were no mantel ornaments but a small mahogany clock and two blue china candlesticks, which looked very old. The sparse furniture was all mahogany. The walls were blue, the curtains blue chintz. There was a long gilt mirror on one side, a single large framed photograph of the Acropolis on the other. On the dark floor were silk rag rugs, but Millicent could not see them, nor the wood fire, which she heard softly snapping. Her window was open a bit, and she could plainly hear the clang of the chapel bell at the academy. It was all strange to her—and quite indescribably peaceful.

That day the doctor let her talk a little. She talked with Mrs. Parke.

"Why've you been so good to me?" she said. "I'm nothing but a stranger to you."

The elder woman patted her hand, from which the rings had been removed.

"The professor and I haven't had any young folks in our big house for a long time," she said. "You see, our daughter is married and lives in Cambridge, and both our sons have gone now. Boys will grow up, the horrid things! They're so much nicer as cubs. So it was really quite selfish of us to take you in."

There was a puzzled frown between Millicent's big eyes.

"You are not really selfish. You are too, too generous," she said, taking the other's hand. "Perhaps you don't know that I'm just a little actress."

"Indeed, we do know it, and so does everybody in Richmond," Mrs. Parke smiled. "You must hurry up and get out, because a lot of people are crazy to meet you."

"To meet *me*? I don't understand. I thought you—you wouldn't approve of actresses in a town like this."

"Oh, dear, what an idea! We love them, especially when they are young and pretty. I've had the hardest time

keeping the professor from peeping in at you while you were asleep. And young Loring, who's coaching the dramatic-club play, is so excited at the prospect of getting your help that he's called up every day to know how you are."

"I—I should like to see Professor Parke," Millicent smiled. "He may look at me if he wants. But I must be a sight in all these bandages."

"Maybe I'll give him a treat to-morrow," the other woman laughed. "Now you must go to sleep again."

But Millicent didn't sleep. She looked at the cool paneling over the mantel, at the elm branches out of the window; she heard the bell summoning to recitation, the gentle, sibilant pur of the fire, the quiet step of the nurse; and—dimly as yet, to be sure—she compared this house where fate had dropped her with the scenes in her play.

"I wouldn't be the heroine here—Mrs. Parke would be!" she suddenly thought. And she put herself to sleep trying to cast Mrs. Parke from among all the aged actresses she knew, rejecting them one by one till slumber came.

"So this is the young Thespian!" said a cheerful voice the next day, as Mrs. Parke led the professor into the room.

Millicent looked up into a face as kindly as his wife's, a stout, full-blooded face, for all its white mustache and crown of thin white hair. The eyes twinkled shrewdly behind gold spectacles, and under the chin Millicent saw an astonishingly vivid red necktie. He wasn't at all like the whiskered professor in her play!

"I've been a terrible bother to you, that I can never pay back for," she said.

"Don't try, don't try," the man answered, patting her hand with exactly the same gesture as his wife's. "We're used to it. Why, we had a son who'd

break a rib or a leg or a neck or something every two or three days. He's the most mended chap you ever saw. Glad you chose our house to get smashed in front of. Besides, we needed a little excitement. Teaching Greek forty years gets a bit monotonous, and mother, here, was just rusting to bits for something to worry about."

He released her hand, and the two old people stood side by side smiling down at her, looking astonishingly alike, as if their forty years together had indeed made them one. A dim, inexplicable emotion seized the girl, with something of the memory of her own childhood—the quarrels of her parents, her father's sprees—no doubt behind it. She suddenly turned her face away and sobbed. Then the woman bent over her and kissed her, while the professor stole sheepishly from the room.

"There, there," the woman's voice was saying. "You must keep quiet for a few days more, I guess."

"It—it isn't that," the girl sobbed. "You are so good! I—I—I don't know why I'm crying. See—I won't any more!"

She smiled, one of her wistful, droopy smiles that were so effective on the stage.

"There, now I'm all right again!" she added.

The professor's wife was regarding her keenly.

"Some day you must tell me all about yourself," she said, and then changed the subject.

After that, the professor dropped in to see her every day, and Millicent looked forward to his coming. He was such a cheery soul, and he talked about the boys, about the coming football game with Richmond's ancient rival—he seemed quite depressed at the prospect of defeat—above all about the theater. He had ideas about the theater

that were new to her. For instance, he declared he liked a good play best without scenery, which seemed incredible to Millicent, who knew as little about the stage of other days and ways as most young actresses of her type—which is nothing at all. She felt her ignorance as the man talked, he who had seen Booth and Salvini and Warren, Modjeska and Adelaide Neilson, and who seemed to have read everything from Sophocles to Shaw. Millicent, of course, knew about Shaw! Once, when she mentioned Weber and Fields, he said they stemmed directly from Aristophanes, and, trotting out, he came back with Gilbert Murray's translation of "The Frogs."

"Here's a good burlesque from 405 B. C.," said he.

Millicent read it. She read more books that he brought her. It slowly dawned on her that he was trying to educate her—unconsciously, perhaps, but that's what it amounted to! Here she was, the heroine of "Cynthia's Return," lying in a New England colonial chamber being educated! But she didn't smile at the reflection. Irony was lost on Millicent as a form of amusement. It puzzled her, rather; and, being fundamentally ambitious, she endeavored to understand the books she read or the nurse read to her. She was fighting, perhaps, for her own self-respect. To admit that she didn't understand them would be to admit that she had her own world all out of perspective.

"Do you read all these books of the professor's?" she asked Mrs. Parke one day, gesturing to the array on the table by her bed.

"Dear me, child, it's all I can do to get through the Boston *Transcript* every evening," the woman laughed.

But Millicent, for the first time, thought she detected a touch of patronage in her hostess' tone—a kindly

patronage, to be sure—and a flush of hot resentment colored her cheeks.

"You don't think I understand them!" she blurted out.

"Don't you understand them, dear?" Mrs. Parke said, sitting down on the edge of the bed. "Tell me about it. Not that I can help you. I haven't opened one of these books in years—really."

Millicent felt so helpless to explain, or even to justify her resentment toward this sweet old lady, that she was silent for a long moment.

"It isn't that I *couldn't* understand them all," she finally said defensively, "if I'd read a lot of other things you have to know to understand these. They're all so easy to the professor because he's read all the other things."

"That's his business," said the woman. "I believe the old meddler is up to his tricks. You know, he can't leave anybody in peace till he's tried to educate 'em! It took me years to educate *him* not to try it on me! I shall have to speak to him severely."

"Don't, please!" Millicent cried. "He thinks I'm interested because it's all about the theater. And so I am, of course—only it's not about the theater I know."

"He has that awful thing called the historic sense," said his wife. "Where did you go to school, dear?"

"School? I never went to school, after I was fourteen. I worked two years in Bloomington's department store, and then went into the chorus of 'The Pink Maid.' I was a pony in those days."

"A what, dear?"

"A pony—one of the little girls who do all the dancing and hard work. I got all my schooling being knocked around and sworn at by stage managers, and—and—well, just fighting to get on in the world."

She spoke bitterly, and the lines in her pretty face grew hard.

"And now you are twenty-one, and a well-known actress. I think you have done wonders," said the woman. "Few of our girls here could do it."

"I'm not twenty-one, really; I'm twenty-five," Millicent confessed, and her confessor hid a smile. "I—I guess I've missed something in life."

"Perhaps you have won something, too," said Mrs. Parke, patting her hand. "Perhaps you have won character."

Millicent averted her face.

"Character!" she whispered.

Then she suddenly turned to her motherly friend and put her arms about her neck.

"Forgive me for speaking like I did when you first came in," she said. "Please forgive me!"

She hid her face again and began to cry. The elder woman looked down at her with knitted brows and shook her head.

It was a great event when the doctor said she could get up on crutches.

"Crutches?" cried the professor. "We have at least half a dozen pairs, one for every child's leg."

So Millicent was propped up, dressed in her prettiest negligee, her hair done, and then the professor and the doctor came in and helped her on the crutches. That afternoon she sat at her window for the first time and watched the academy boys go by to a football game. Many of them looked up at her, and she could not resist smiling back, they looked so young and fresh and healthy.

The next day her first dizziness and weakness had passed, and she could get downstairs. She insisted on coming down to breakfast. It was her first meal with her hosts, as well as her first glimpse of the house below. The lower rooms were lofty—a full fifteen feet. On one side of the house, a great library extended out as a separate wing, with a domed ceiling and stacks upon stacks of books. The beautiful

white woodwork, in the purest colonial pattern, the oil portraits of distinguished-looking old gentlemen famous in the history of Richmond and the nation, the pervasive mahogany, did not give the impression of wealth, however, but of ancient stability and solid, inherited comfort and simplicity. Millicent was too sensitive not to get something of this impression, and not to feel the architectural charm of the dwelling. She took her place at the table, the professor aiding her, in a gay mood, glad to be about again and to sit down with these dear people. She began at once to chatter, when Mrs. Parke laid gentle fingers on her arm and cautioned silence. Surprised, she looked about. The professor was bowing his head. Coloring, the girl quickly did the same.

He spoke a brief and simple grace and then looked up with his cheery smile and answered the last question she had asked. But Millicent was silent. She had never sat at a table before where grace was spoken, and she was not rebellious of the custom, as *Cynthia* would have been in the play, but ashamed that she had betrayed her ignorance. Once more the actual New England was making her feel as small as the stage New England made *Cynthia* feel superior. Of course, she told herself, "other people" didn't say grace any more, but that was no reason for not respecting the custom among those who did, for not even remembering that there was such a custom.

Mrs. Parke, however, soon restored her to high spirits. That night she was going to give a dinner party, to meet the distinguished actress! The guests were to be Tom Loring, the young instructor she'd spoken of, who was coaching the play, and Nellie Thompson, who was to have the leading part, and Professor Bennett and his wife—if they could find some one to stay with the baby—and one other unattached

male. Millicent saw how pleased her hostess was at the prospect, and she resolved to do her best, not to be *Cynthia*, but a guest that Mrs. Parke would be proud of.

She went through her trunk that morning, searching for a gown. The evening dresses she had were all cut too low, she felt sure. And she looked her prettiest in them, too! She put on the one least décolleté and called Mrs. Parke.

"This—this is pretty low for Richmond, isn't it?" she asked.

"I'm afraid, my dear, that it is," the other answered. "And you do look sweet in it, too! It's a shame to cover up such pretty shoulders. Do you know, when I was a girl, we wore worse ones than that, though? I've got some old point lace you can't see in, which will cover the law, so Mrs. Bennett won't think her husband has been corrupted."

Back she presently trotted with the lace, and divided her day between preparations for the dinner and aiding her guest's toilet. When she finally went to get herself ready, Millicent surveyed her toilet case on the bureau, picking up her rouge and dropping it back, opening a tiny perfume bottle and closing it again. When the professor finally came to help her downstairs, the only scent upon her was that of her own abundant hair. In a way, Millicent had won a victory—or New England had, as you choose to put it.

When they were halfway down the stairs, the maid opened the door to admit a young man. He saw them at once, tossed his hat onto the hall table, and almost at a bound had taken the old professor's place. With a steady arm about Millicent, he so nearly lifted her down to the bottom that she could feel the steellike power in his body. The professor laughingly introduced Tom Loring as they descended. As the young instructor put her

crutches deftly under her arms again, she looked up into his face to thank him, and then looked quickly away. Their eyes had met; something had passed between them. Millicent knew she had encountered a man who called to her.

"You—you are very strong," she said.

"Tom's baseball and track coach as well as English teacher," the professor laughed. "The only way to make the new generation of cubs respect you is to be able to beat 'em at their games. Samson would have been a schoolmaster to-day."

"Nonsense!" Loring grinned. "If I could only keep the discipline you do!"

Millicent passed into the parlor between them, and almost immediately the other guests came. Professor Bennett, a clean-cut, energetic man under forty, and his placid and rather stout wife came first, with Sedgwick of the English department, and a moment later Nellie Thompson entered.

"Is she to be your leading woman?" Millicent whispered to Loring, who was standing over her chair.

"Yes," said he.

Nellie was a girl of Millicent's own age, perhaps a little taller, dressed simply in white, her hair done plainly to show a curiously calm forehead. She spoke to her hosts in a rich, low voice and, as they led her to Millicent, put out a rather large hand with a muscular grip in her ringless fingers. Millicent was angry with herself for wishing that she had not put on *her* rings. She was more angry when the newcomer tossed an easy "Hello, Tom! How's the cross-country squad?" to Loring. What was a cross-country squad, anyhow, she wondered.

But at the table Mrs. Parke put her next to Tom, while Nellie sat across the table with Sedgwick, who wore a little Stevensonian goatee and made rather amusing epigrams. Conversa-

tion was easy, familiar, and for the most part general. There was a certain amount of academic banter between these people who knew each other so well, but Millicent was never ignored, and the talk soon got around to the subject of the coming play.

"We consider it an act of beneficent Providence that you were wrecked in our midst," said Sedgwick. "Indeed, Loring remarked when he heard of it, 'Now there's Hope for our play—'"

"I never made such an atrocious pun!" Loring cried. "He blames all his bad jokes on other people, always," he added, turning to Millicent.

"Don't you think it's time somebody told me what this play is?" she laughed. "It's probably so highbrow I never even heard of it."

"On the contrary," Sedgwick replied, "in spite of Professor Parke's plea that we mount the 'Iphigenia in Tauris' in the original Greek, we have selected 'Her Husband's Wife,' by A. E. Thomas. Miss Thompson will be *Irene*, Loring will be the perplexed husband, and I shall grace the cast as the uncle."

"Don't you mean disgrace?" suggested Mrs. Parke.

"But what do the nice little boys do?" asked Millicent.

"One of 'em is the brother, and the rest come and laugh at him," said Sedgwick. "Our club, I should add, is rather for the edification of the faculty than for the education of the pupils."

"Oh," said she, "it isn't educational?"

"God forbid!" cried the irrepressible Sedgwick. "You mustn't think we take even our pleasures so seriously when we are far from Broadway. That was a mistake of the little play you were making possible before the thoughtful chauffeur deposited you at Mrs. Parke's front door, if I may be so bold as to venture a criticism."

Millicent felt all eyes upon her, to

see what reply she would make to this. She was on the defensive, and felt rather helpless.

"That was one of many troubles with the play, I fear," she answered, not letting her glance fall; and she thought she caught the hint of an approving twinkle in old Professor Parke's eye. But she felt easier when the conversation shifted to the practical problems of "Her Husband's Wife," which she herself had acted one summer in stock. She was on her own ground, where none could dispute her.

The party adjourned for coffee to the professor's library, where the men lit their cigars—all save Loring, who did not smoke—and the conversation broke up into groups. Millicent found herself with Loring, near the open fire. He asked eager questions about the play, and she did her best to answer them all. But gradually their talk drifted into other channels. She led him to talk about his work in the school, to tell her how he had gained his enthusiasm for the drama four years before in Harvard, finally to speak of the play he himself was at work upon.

"For of course I'm writing a play," he explained. "Everybody is now!"

"I'd like to see it," she said.

"Would you read it?" he cried. "No, you couldn't. It's all at loose ends yet."

"Couldn't you read it to me?" She barely let the corners of her eyes meet his.

"I'd—I'd—— It would be wonderful!" he answered, and suddenly they both fell silent at the prospect evoked, and looked into the dangerous fire.

It seemed to Millicent that they had but just come into the library when Professor Bennett's wife rose to go, which was a signal to the others. Loring, with a single tensing of his arm under hers, brought Millicent to her feet, and with his other hand put a crutch into place. She thrilled once

more at his physical power, so well concealed under his trim dinner jacket.

"Loring seems to have monopolized you," Sedgwick was saying to her. "These athletic coaches have a gay way with 'em."

"I assure you we have been talking nothing but tiresome stage shop—honor bright!" Millicent smiled.

"Then," said Sedgwick, "Loring is a bigger ninny than I thought he was."

He shook her hand, his eyes laughing into hers. She met his glance in the same spirit, but she was uncomfortable. He seemed, in some vague way, to be probing her.

Nellie Thompson's handshake was noticeably less hearty than when she had arrived before dinner. Millicent thought she knew why. She was sure a moment later, for Loring was still talking with her when Nellie looked in at the door, cloaked and scuffed.

"Are you going to make me walk home alone, Tom?" she said, laughing—but the laugh did not deceive Millicent.

"I'll come at three to-morrow," Tom whispered, and left her.

He did not shake hands. He started to, and then refrained in some embarrassment.

"Well, mother," cried Professor Parke, when they had gone, "the party was a great success, but I guess our little Thespian is tired. Come, child, to bed with you!"

"I'm not tired," she answered. "I'm very, very happy, you darling people!"

She lay a long while awake, thinking of Tom Loring. He was stronger than the acrobatic dancer who had once thrown her about in a musical comedy. He was as good looking—in a different way, of course—as any leading man she knew of. He was so earnest in his work, so interested in *her* work, so alive and vital, and yet so much like these dear Parke people and this old house, and so different from

the men fate had thrown across her pathway heretofore. A memory smote her, and in the darkness of her chamber she covered her eyes as if to shut it out, and shuddered. She tried not to think any more, but thought only the harder. It was nearly morning when she dropped to sleep.

But the next day, under the influence of anticipation, she put aside the thoughts that had troubled her and waited for Loring's ring at the door. Mrs. Parke ensconced them in her sunny sewing room upstairs, and with her leg on a cushioned hassock and Loring in a low chair beside her, Millicent sank back to listen to the play and let her eyes study the face of the reader. She had never in her life been so conscious of pleasure in the company of a man. Indeed, Loring was the first man she had ever known who embodied those ideals of attractiveness and force and goodness that most girls secretly cherish. She had cherished them once—so long ago that she had forgotten. They all awoke now, with a new, a tender significance. She could hardly keep her mind on the play, so much were her emotions stirred. Nor, when she spoke, could she keep a softness out of her voice.

She was too much stirred to coquet with him. But she wanted to feel his strength and asked him to help her to another chair, letting him put an arm around her while she hopped, laughing, on her sound foot. Loring was moved, too. In fact, the discussion of the play languished. They talked about themselves, instead, looking into the fire as the early twilight dusked the room—talking softly, close together. It was the happiest hour Millicent had ever spent, she thought, and for once she resented the coming of Mrs. Parke, followed by the maid with tea.

The next day he sent her flowers, and he came again in the afternoon. So did Sedgwick.

"Don't go till he's gone," she whispered in Loring's ear, fearful that she might lose her precious hour.

Mrs. Parke remained in the room, too, and Millicent realized that Sedgwick's call had an element of formality about it. There were other callers during the next two or three days, and Loring came, when he could, in the evening, that they might be alone. Millicent practiced no self-deception; she told herself that she loved him, and it was wonderful to have him so drawn to her. In a few days more, she would be able to travel—and then she would see him no more. Why shouldn't she see him now? Whose business was it but hers and his?

And yet she felt guilty and miserable sometimes when he had gone, and Mrs. Parke looked at her in a curious way.

"Do you think Tom Loring will make a success with his play?" the elder woman inquired.

"Why not? He'd make a success of anything!" Millicent answered, with naive enthusiasm.

"You like him, don't you?"

"I think he's the finest, best man I ever knew," the girl replied, with sober honesty. "He—he's different from all the men I've had to meet and—and fight."

The other made no reply.

"I—I suppose he'll marry Miss Thompson some day?" Millicent queried.

"What makes you think that, my dear?"

"Only that she would jump at the chance to have him," said the girl, perhaps with a hint of bitterness in her tone.

"But doesn't it rather more depend on Tom—on Mr. Loring?"

"Not necessarily," Millicent replied.

"That is a trifle unkind, my dear," said the woman gently.

"I didn't mean it to be. It's true. You know it's true."

"Hardly of Nellie Thompson, I think," Mrs. Parke said, with a touch of dignity that Millicent felt and that seemed suddenly to put up an invisible fence around these people they were discussing—and to leave Millicent on the other side. It hurt her pride, and though it angered her, it made her feel a little cheap. Why wasn't she as good as they were, she asked herself, with a flush. What right did a lot of old mahogany and white woodwork give them to put her outside the fence? Yet it did give them the right, it did—and that was what hurt.

The next day the doctor decreed that she could go out of the house and attend a rehearsal of "Her Husband's Wife," if she were driven to the hall. Loring and Sedgwick came after supper to get her, lifting her into the carriage. The cast, and all the academy boys who could get jobs as "stage hands," were assembled to meet her. She felt suddenly in her own element, with the footlights ablaze, and at Loring's request, she took command of the rehearsal.

"Am I to have full charge?" she laughed.

"Entire," said they.

"May I change the cast if I see fit?"

"Anything."

"All right. I'm boss for the evening. Begin Act I., please."

The rehearsal had not progressed far, after the entrance of the little hypochondriac wife, Irene, before Millicent rapped with her cane for it to stop. The players came forward to listen.

"Miss Thompson will never do for Irene," she said. "Nobody will ever believe that she is a silly little hypochondriac. She ought to play *Emily Ladew*."

"Just what I told you, Tom," said Sedgwick.

"But Nellie's our leading woman, and that's the leading part," said poor

Loring, fearful that Nellie's feelings would be hurt. He went quickly over to her. "Couldn't you show her how the part is played, Miss Hope?"

"Yes, I could show her, but that wouldn't make any difference. It's a question of personality. Mrs. Fiske couldn't play a soubrette, you know."

"Oh, but please try!" said Loring.

He was looking solicitously at Nellie, so solicitously that Millicent was almost sorry she had spoken. Why not let the girl go on and make a mess of the part? The rest seemed to feel a tenseness in the situation not wholly explicable to them.

"Will you try it after her, Nellie?" Loring was saying.

Suddenly Nellie laughed.

"What a fuss you are all making!" she said. "Miss Hope is quite right. I've always known I couldn't do the part. She's confirmed my suspicions. I'm afraid, Tom, I'm too much myself to play any part." She looked at him with a little smile that made Millicent wince: "But I'll try *Emily*, if Bessie Forbes will swap."

"Swap for the lead? That's me!" cried Bessie, a pink and buxom young thing. "Here, give me a book. I'll read the lines. How do I do it, Miss Hope?"

Millicent rose to go to the stage, pretending more difficulty than she felt. Loring, of course, sprang to aid her. But Nellie did not even watch him. She had turned away, and was chatting lightly with Sedgwick!

"She's not even afraid of me!" thought Millicent, and in her anger she began to play the part as well as she knew how, till all the youthful stage hands as well as the cast applauded joyously.

"Good gracious, and you expect me to do that?" cried Bessie.

"Try it, try it!" Loring exclaimed.

Bessie was undoubtedly a vast improvement over Miss Thompson, and

the first act was finished before they went home, all the boys clamoring for a chance to help Millicent into her carriage. They lined up and gave her the academy yell after she was seated, and she threw out a flower to them which they scrambled for, and drove off laughing and triumphant, with Loring at her side.

"You are wonderful!" he whispered to her, as he lingered a second after Sedgwick had gone down the steps. "Wonderful!" He suddenly gripped her hand hard and was gone.

The next morning Millicent received a long telegram from her manager. The new *Cynthia* was a frost. How long before she could play again? If it wasn't too long, he'd lay up the company and wait. Why the devil hadn't she written, anyhow?

Millicent held this yellow paper in her lap. "*Cynthia's Return!*" Railroad trips, sleeping cars, bad hotels—she had not thought of them for weeks. She had not thought of anything for weeks but this new life—and Tom Loring. There was no such life in the play, and no such character as Tom, nor any actor to play him! The piece seemed suddenly so false and shabby that it disgusted her. But what could she do? The cold fact faced her that she had to go to work again. She couldn't stay on here after she was well. Besides, that was her life; this had been her vacation. But to leave Tom— She couldn't, she couldn't!

Loring came late that afternoon, so late she had begun to fear that he wouldn't come at all. She had the telegram in her hand.

"See," she said, "the call of the wild. I'm going back. The doctor says I may, day after to-morrow."

He stood facing her, and his two hands went out and gripped hers.

"No, no! It isn't true!" he cried.

"You'll be sorry, a little bit, to see me go?" She tried to laugh, but man-

aged only one of her famous crooked, heartbreaking little smiles.

"Sorry! I—I can't bear it! You shan't go. Miss Hope—Millicent—I love you. From the first second, when I touched you on the stairs, I've loved you. You've got to stay! You've got to be my wife!"

Millicent tugged her hands free and staggered back a step.

"Your wife?" she whispered. "Your wife? You'd marry me, a little actress nobody knows anything about, and bring me here to live? You don't know what you're saying!"

"I usually know what I say," he answered. "You talk as if being an artist were regarded here as a crime—you dear, sweet, adorable, innocent thing, you!"

"Don't!" She pressed him from her. "You've paid me the greatest compliment I've ever received or ever can receive. But you don't know. I don't belong in Richmond—dear." She lingered deliciously over the word. "You must marry somebody who does. You must marry Nellie Thompson. She loves you."

"What are you saying?" he exclaimed. "Nellie loves me? Why, we're just old boy-and-girl friends. She's the salt of the earth, of course, self-reliant and solid as they make 'em—but, dear Millicent, it's *you* I love!"

But she had seen the cloud cross his brow, and she would not let him touch her.

"Come to-morrow, dear," was all she could find to say. "I must think—I must think."

She watched him go, her handkerchief at her mouth. Then she hurried to her own room and fell on the bed. What should she do? What should she do? Oh, if only she didn't love him so, want him so, long so for the clasp of his arms about her!

Presently Mrs. Parke tapped on her door, and she sat up, resolved.

"Don't turn on the light," she said. "I couldn't tell you in the light. Sit here, near me, please. Tom Loring has asked me to marry him."

"I guessed he would," the old lady answered, and waited.

Millicent rushed on.

"I didn't try to make him. Oh, Mrs. Parke, I didn't! I never dreamed it would go that far! But he was so different from any man I'd known, and it was so sweet to be with him, and I love him so—God, how I love him!"

She was quite unconscious of her lapse into an oath, burying her face and shaking with a dry sob.

"But if you love him, dear, and he loves you—really and truly—there's nothing more to be said—is there?"

"Oh, if there wasn't! If I didn't have to tell you, who've been so good and kind to me! It isn't that I'm no wife for him because I was brought up bad, with no education like Nellie Thompson has, or because I've been an actress and the stage has got into my blood. Maybe I could fit in here after a while, or he could be a playwright. Do you believe he ought to be a playwright or teach boys?"

"I think some day he will be principal of our academy," Mrs. Parke answered gravely.

"Yes, you're right. He belongs here. I can see that. Oh, what have I done to you all—to him?"

"But what have you done, my dear?"

The girl suddenly sat up straight, gulped hard, and almost shot her words out.

"My father was a drunk. He beat up my mother and us kids sometimes—no, often. I told you I went to work in a store at fourteen. Well, I got knocked around a good bit there. I went into a chorus at sixteen. It was hard work and little pay, and a lot of girls riding around in motors. I had ambitions, though. I wanted to act. I couldn't

get a chance, not for three or four years. Then—well, never mind who—a manager gave me a chance—at his price. It meant comfort, luxury, fulfilled ambition—it meant giving my mother a chance to rest. Poor mother, she died before she'd rested much! I lived with him a year. I hated him before it was over, but I didn't hate myself much then. Other girls were doing it. I—I just did what they did. I made good acting, and I left him. *But there's that year!* It's come back now to haunt me. Oh, my God, life's terrible cruel!"

She turned away from Mrs. Parke and buried her face again. — But she felt an arm encircle her shoulder and a gentle hand brush her hair. Then her sobs came.

"You don't hate me?" she whispered.

"You poor, poor child!" was the only answer, as the kindly hand stroked on.

When her sobs were over, the elder woman said:

"Did you tell Tom what you've told me?"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "I'd die first!"

"But if you were to marry him, you'd have to tell him first, of course, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," Millicent admitted. She straightened up again. "If I never tell him, if I just refuse him and go 'way, he'll think of me always as—as he does now, when he's principal of the academy, won't he?" she added.

"Yes, dear, I'm sure he would. But he might forgive you, if you told him, too."

"Forgive me?" The words came very low. "Yes, if any man would, he'd be the man. Oh, Mrs. Parke, why do you tempt me? I just know I'm not the wife for him. I—I hate Nellie Thompson! I'll be honest—I hate her! But she's the one he ought to marry. I—I've got the stage in my system now, and—and—well, I did what I did. I'm bad, rotten bad, that's what I am!"

The elder woman kissed her softly on the lips, to hush her words.

"I'll send some supper up to you," she said. "Nobody can decide this question but yourself. But ask our dear Father in heaven to help you."

She spoke quietly, simply, and when she was gone, Millicent found herself on her knees by the bed, her dumb lips struggling to form a prayer.

The next day Loring did not wait for afternoon. He came down at ten o'clock, between recitations. Mrs. Parke sent him up to the sewing room, and slipped away. She had not asked Millicent any questions that morning, but she kissed her before the girl crossed the hall to meet Tom, and Millicent clung to her a moment, as to a mother.

She entered the room with her mind made up.

"I can't marry you, dear," she said abruptly, before her purpose should fail. "You don't understand what my life has been, and is, and'll have to be. I've got the stage in my blood, and I see my name in electric lights on the Belasco Theater every time I dream. It's been sweet to know you this way, in this peaceful, dear old town. But we were never made to—to marry, we actresses. Why, I'd be getting a divorce from you in two or three years!" She tried to finish with a laugh.

"Don't!" Loring commanded. "You shan't belittle yourself. I grasp that the only life I can offer my wife at present doesn't suit you. Let it go at that. Perhaps you really don't care for me at all. You've never said you did."

"Oh, Tom!" she whispered.

She could not help it. She could not keep the soft desire from her eyes or her arms from rocking. For a long moment she lay against his heart, his lips on her lips, and then she sprang away, with a guilty moan.

"I'm wicked, wicked!" she cried. "I mean it, Tom. Our episode—our dear,

sweet episode—is over. That's all it was. Go back to your eleven o'clock, now, and forget me. See, I've got the academy slang, haven't I?—eleven o'clock."

He stood solid.

"You are telling the truth, the final truth?" he asked.

She nodded, not trusting to speech again. She longed to hear him say that he would always remember her, that he would treasure the recollection of their hours together in the casket of his heart. She hoped, even, that he would prolong their parting. But he said nothing except, "Good-by." The temperament of his ancestors was strong in him at that moment. She could not even see from his face if he were angry. He seemed suddenly to have acquired a mask, to have become a stranger to her. She heard his voice, level and monotonous, saying, "Good-by," and felt his powerful fingers in a handshake. Then he was gone.

When Mrs. Parke came, Millicent was packing feverishly.

"I'm going to Boston this afternoon to catch the night train to New York," she said. "I must get to work again—to work—to work!"

"Work is a blessing, dear," Mrs. Parke answered, "but father and I will be sorry to see you go. The house will be lonely again without you."

"You angel!" Millicent cried, rising and throwing her arms about the old lady. "You angel! Perhaps I don't hate to go, too! But I might meet him again. I couldn't stand that."

"He was hard hit, poor boy," Mrs. Parke said.

"How could you tell? When he left me, he might have been saying good-by to a stranger."

"Ah, but I have lived with his kind all my life, child! I know."

Millicent was silent. Again she felt the invisible wall and knew that she

had done right. But she could not keep back her tears.

Mrs. Parke said no more to her then, but as she was dressing to start for the station, the old lady came to her room once more with a bunch of flowers, and pinned them on her coat.

"You must write to us often," she said, "often. And you must let us know when you come anywhere near us, so we can meet. I think you are a brave, true, sweet, good little woman, and I shall ask God in my prayers every night to bless and keep you, as He will because of what you have done."

"But I did it out of selfishness, so—so he would never know," Millicent cried, touched to tears by the other's words.

"Dear child, never mind. That you wanted him never to know, if that *were* your only reason, makes me bid good-bye to my little girl without any fears for her future."

Millicent sobbed on her shoulder, and then, raising a tear-stained face, she kissed her.

"I promise you, like as if I were your own daughter," she said.

The professor rode with her to the station. Whatever he knew, he gave no sign, but tried to jest and make her parting cheery. She saw him at the last, waving his hat to her from the platform.

Then the train rounded a curve, and, looking back, Millicent could see the brick towers of Richmond Academy rising over the elms on the hill and the tall spire of the stone chapel. Under one of those towers, Tom was teaching his boys. She would never see him again; she would never dare to see the towers again or hear the chapel bell or the thud of a punted football. She would never again hear a football without thinking of him. Through a choking mist of tears, she saw the last tower fade from sight. So this was

Cynthia's return! She was going back to Broadway. She was going back to the old life. But the victory wasn't Broadway's; the victory was Richmond's. It was New England that had

conquered. In grim self-abasement, Millicent laughed bitterly to herself.

It did not occur to her that it was she who had conquered—which shows that her victory was complete.



A PAGAN PASSES

FOR me is all sweet, savage passion,
Passion of gladness, of pain—
The breath of the forest, mist haunted,
The moon gleams, unholy, enchanted,
The sea with its luring refrain;
For me the mad earth feast is granted
Through all the wild days of my reign.

The stars hear the song of my yearning;
In the darkness that is not alone,
Flesh unto flesh is low calling
The challenge, insistent, entralling;
And now at my feet she is falling—
Yet all I have claimed is my own.
(Came one who thought to deny me,
Wanton my love, and defy me.
I killed, and the thirsty earth drank him,
But I have not forgotten his moan.)

Mine, all is mine for the taking.
Why should I grovel and pray?
God of the earth in my making,
I am the Law and the Way;
Love thirst and hate thirst I'm slaking
In a world that was born for my play.
And You, in the shadows' dim veiling,
You Horror, that knows not the light—
Thing that was crouching before me
Ere the birth of the woman that bore me,
Thing that would chill me and kill me—
Ere Your gray languor shall still me,
Hear You the song of my might.
You may end me, but conquer me—never!
Always my mocking shall say:
"You are Death for a day and forever,
But I, I am Life—for a day!"

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



The Woman Who Broke the Rule

By May Edginton

Author of "He That Is Without Sin," "Happiness Ever After," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Tina Laurie and her friend, Marguerite Allen, with whom she shares an apartment, are employed as models at Silver's, a photographer's shop in London. Marguerite, cynical and pleasure loving, does not hesitate to accept the attentions of the men with whom she comes in contact, but Tina, though half envious of her friend's experiences, has never tried to emulate them. On a week-end trip to visit her parents in the country, Tina has a brief conversation on the train with a man who is evidently strongly attracted to her and to whom she is as strongly attracted. He succeeds in finding out where she is employed. Upon her return, Tina, in a fit of rebellion against the drabness of her life, accepts the invitation of a wealthy newspaper man, Merchant, an old admirer of Marguerite's, to spend the week-end motoring with him. She sets out childishly delighted with the handsome fur coat he has bought her; she returns the next day sick with disgust. Marguerite's malicious enjoyment of the situation does not add to her peace of mind. In an effort to set things right, she accepts an offer of marriage from Addlebourne, an assistant at Silver's, but her honesty leads her to confess the episode with Merchant, and Addlebourne withdraws his offer. Shortly afterward, Stranger, the man of the train, appears at Silver's, ostensibly to have his picture taken, but very evidently to see Tina.

CHAPTER VI.

STANGER obtained speech with Tina without difficulty when he called again at the studio, for Silver opened the door of the retouching room, left it thrown wide, and called slyly:

"Oh, Miss Laurie, bring me those proofs for Mr. Stranger."

She walked out with them into the blaze of sun that was beating in. The light falling upon her blond head made a pale nimbus of her light hair and gave her more markedly than ever that angelic illusion about which Silver had jested before; and her slenderness, draped in the short black serge skirt and limp blouse of workday, made her wonderfully little, childish, and frail.

After a word or two and a bland

look or two, Silver went away with his sleek, worldly, know-all air, and the great, brown, flawlessly tailored man and the small, flaxen, shabby girl were alone; save for a view of Marguerite's back through the open door of the retouching room.

"I think," Tina said sedately, alluding to the photographs, "that you'll find them very good."

One after another she handed to him the proofs, affecting to feel the interest in them that he also affected to feel; putting in a stereotyped word of judgment here and there in which he concurred; while she tried not to feel before him that intense and terrible humility which, newly, she felt before all men, and he tried to overcome, sufficiently to seem at ease, that intense

and beautiful humility which, newly, he felt before this little, moneyless, fragile retoucher girl.

He knew what he wanted to do. He knew the resources of his London, used before in many springs on behalf of many forgotten women. To say: "Richmond would be delightful just now. My car's handy. Do let me run you down there this evening, and let's dine at the Star and Garter," seemed easy enough. But it was far from easy.

More than that, he knew, as he handed back, with banal approval, proof after proof, that it was impossible. Had the invitation been given, he would have hated to hear her accept it, freely and easily, as a hundred others might have done. Therefore, with a sensitiveness queerly raw, he dared not give it, and—by what a hair's breadth chance!—she remained before him with all that sunlight on her, a remotely sweet, whitely perfect angel girl.

Each was constrained, and each found something—anything—nothing that mattered—to say at random; and behind the careful masks that they wore on their faces, neither entirely sensed the wild and simple joy that ran in the veins of each like a swift, but hidden current.

"Is that where you work?" He peered into the small room where Marquerite presented to them a back of weary and scornful expression.

"Yes. I retouch, you know."

"Oh." Then he went on: "It seems a shame to be in the whole of a lovely day like this. Are you in all day?"

"From nine till five," she replied, with studied unconcern.

"Ah," he said vaguely, staring at the last proof, which had not left his hand. "I—I'm doing a good bit of motoring just now."

"How delightful!" she cried, with an effect of airy insincerity.

"I—I'm holidaying, you know. Back

in town after six whole years in Jamaica."

"Oh! Really?"

"I say," he hurried out, "I hope you didn't mind my speaking to you in the train the other day."

"Not a bit," she said composedly. "After all, one learns to discriminate, doesn't one?"

"You're awfully good about it. I—I thought a good deal about it afterward. Wondered if you'd snub me should we ever meet again."

"Did you?" she asked slowly.

"Yes, I did really. I felt, somehow, that I'd blundered. But since you're so kind—" He looked at her rather wistfully, gave back the photograph, obviously broke off what he had intended to say, and wished her a good morning.

As he reached the door, he took a quick look back, to see that she, too, was looking back. Their eyes met. While she stood irresolutely, he returned to her.

"Oh, Miss Laurie, by the way—will you—won't you—couldn't you make use of me and my car some day?"

Tina's arched upper lip lifted, and her smile shone out.

"Oh!" she cried spontaneously. "That would be delightful!"

"It is good of you. Then—when? May we fix a day?"

"I get half Saturday and all Sunday every week-end."

"May it be all one Sunday?"

"Delighted," said Tina, returning in an access of stiffness to the stereotyped manner.

"May it be next Sunday?"

"Delighted," she replied once more, a high color in her pale cheeks.

Stranger wore that air of triumph which she half dreaded.

"Where," he asked, "shall I call for you?"

She gave him the King's Road address, agreed waveringly to the early hour of ten o'clock for rendezvous, and

ran back to Marguerite, closing the door abruptly between herself and conquering man.

"Well?" she cried defiantly.

She knew Marguerite had listened to all.

"Nothing," said Marguerite.

"I know, of course, that you heard everything we said."

"It's no use asking me to talk about your affairs, Tina, for they're your own, and you've got to profit, or lose, by your experiences, the same as I and other girls do."

"But you're thinking me a fool?"

"I'm not thinking anything of the sort. Perhaps I think you're wise to take what you can get and learn to like it—the same as I and other girls do. You won't buy many roses for yourself out of two pounds a week in London, and, after all, you haven't got eternity before you to choose your road in. Your liberty of choice, my dear, lasts as long as your looks, and you'd better realize it."

"You don't understand—"

"Do you?"

"If you'd listen, Marg'rite! You don't understand that in spite of—of—last week-end, I don't think the whole world's bad, like you do. Somewhere it's bad, but somewhere it's all good, and somewhere m-m-men are s-straight, and somewhere—"

"Somewhere the sun is shining," Marguerite sang in her husky-rich voice, flinging into it a mockery of exaggerated pathos.

"I suppose some day, Marg'rite," Tina said, with a big effort at control, "you'll think you'd like to settle down and marry and be happy and safe forever and ever?"

"I shall never think about it. I don't think."

"Well, since last week-end, I do."

"Tina," said Marguerite with a grudging kindness, "don't think too seriously of Mr. Stranger."

But Tina, over her work, kept silence.

On Thursday Stranger came in again with a dog to be photographed, and on Saturday morning he called to see the results, and on each visit he found time to ratify with Tina their arrangement for Sunday.

Sunday morning arrived a little bleakly at King's Road. While the sun beamed in a blue sky, while flower sellers with baskets of violets managed to tempt most of the few people who were out at ten o'clock to buy, little cruel winds whistled down the street, lifted and whirled about anything they could find, and penetrated through Tina's window, as she sat at the dressing table, watched sleepily by Marguerite from the bed.

Marguerite had an arrangement for the day, too—an afternoon concert and tea with some admiring male—but the eyes that, from her crumpled pillow, followed Tina's every movement held in them a weary, a slow, and a deadly envy that brooded about her like a threatening spirit.

Tina put on, with exquisite care, her new blue serge, and she borrowed, unwillingly, the turban in which Stranger had first seen her, saying fragmentarily as she jammed it on:

"It's little and suitable for motoring. I haven't anything suitable, you see, dear. But if I'm to do much motoring, I shall get one for myself, of course. It's awfully sweet of you, Marg'rite; simply awfully sweet." Then she felt the little chill breezes sweeping in—and shivered.

In the wardrobe hung a garment she had not looked at or touched since last Sunday night, a fur coat of supple softness, of ample cut and modish design, in which a slim little girl could nestle down and be most snug. Twice Tina put away the thought with loathing; but the third time its necessity was blown upon her by the intrusion of the keen April wind, she murmured reluctantly:

"Marg'rite, I'll have to wear the fur coat."

"Of course you will, stupid."

So Tina lifted the coat from the wardrobe, and the silk lining slithered so ingratiatingly over her blue serge, and the great collar made so ravishing a setting for her small pale face and rakish turban, that she reconciled herself with a sigh to Marguerite's philosophy of men and things.

"Do I look all right?"

"Yes," said Marguerite half sullenly, pulling the quilt right up to the cloud of hair upon her forehead.

A very musical horn sounded softly from the street, and Tina exclaimed:

"I know it's him!"

"His car isn't the only one in town," said Marguerite moodily.

But when Tina had run on flying feet down all the flights of stone stairs, there was Stranger, huge and brown, in a leather coat, seated in a long brown car and smiling quietly with anticipation.

"I've planned a day," he said, as he tucked her in.

"I'm sure," she murmured flutteringly, "that it will be delightful."

And once more, to the quickened thud of her heartbeats, she was being whirled out of town in a great car, by a man whose acquaintance with her was the merest, only one short week after she had declared her stupid, beautiful toy world in atoms.

She hoped with a passionate hope that total and splendid reconstruction was in progress, but she was not sure, while they rushed over mile after mile of dry white roads, while she talked and laughed of a dozen things. And while they sought for the prettiest way-side picnic place and found it by mutual consent, and while, in comradely way, presently, they shared the pleasant labor of unpacking a lunch basket, still she was not sure.

Then came the moment that, from

long listening to Marguerite's dreary sophistries, Tina had partly expected, partly dreaded, throughout the happy morning. All her quick wits sensed it, her pulses beat, her heart hotly resented its coming. In the way of women, who always know when such a moment is at hand almost before the man knows himself, Tina knew. Age-long seconds before it came, she could have cried aloud with disappointment and fury, but at first realization pride kept her quiet, and after the first realization, the new sadness did it, that sadness which she had learned a week ago.

They were together in the tonneau of the car, repacking the lunch utensils. Stranger's hand, large, brown, and seeming to her now horribly powerful, closed upon hers. She looked up, read or misread the curious light in his eyes, and looked down. She did not know that her lips went perceptibly dry, her wind-flushed face white, and that in the fleet look she had prayed.

Her one swift, formless thought ran: "He is like the others, after all, and Marg'rite is right. He is going to——"

Stranger said, breathlessly:

"Tina, kiss me."

She dropped away from him into a corner of the seat, where she sank down, half buried in the fur coat, and covered her face with her hands.

"You spoil the world!"

CHAPTER VII.

Stranger kicked aside the lunch basket and sat down, at a respectful distance, beside her. He spoke again, almost as breathlessly as before.

"Tina," he begged, "Miss Laurie, forgive me! I'm sorry! I'm quite wrong! I've made the beastliest possible mistake. But—but—for God's sake do see that it was just a mistake and say the day isn't spoiled, let alone the world."

Her stare of incredulous relief made him flush a dull red.

"I'm very clumsy," he said haltingly. "Do, do forgive me! And look, the day isn't going to last forever, so shall we drive on?"

"Yes," she murmured in a small voice.

"We have just the most ripping piece of country before us."

"Where are we going?"

"Since it's all left to me, I'm going to take you to tea at a place I very much want you to see." After a pause, he added slowly: "I hadn't quite decided, when we started out, that we should get there, but now I'm sure that we shall."

"Oh, really? I'm sure it will be delight——"

Stranger's laughter broke into her conventionalities, and he looked at her with such unfeigned gladness that she was half uneasy once more.

"Yes, Miss Laurie, it will certainly be delightful. You'll sit in front with me again?"

She returned to the front seat and Stranger drove on. He wore a considering air, and Tina, rather sorrowful and more bewildered, considered him and was unable to make up her mind. True, Marguerite used to say:

"Never trust 'em, dear; never, *never*. A man will wait and wait, and plot and plan for what he wants, if it's a woman in question, and look as harmless as a curate all the time."

But Tina wanted very badly to trust Stranger. She longed for the respect and esteem that he would show to the more sheltered and inaccessible girls of his own kind, and she longed that he should at least imagine her inaccessible. She thought a great deal, and very seriously, as she sat beside him wrapped in her hated fur coat.

By and by he spoke of the fur coat, with a certain reserve, yet curiosity in his manner. He said:

"Women seem to have taken immensely to fur coats, I notice. Six

6

years ago, when I was last home, one hardly saw them in the streets, but now every second woman one meets is covered from head to foot with fur in the winter, and how on earth so many people's purses meet the strain I can't think."

"They're not all *very* expensive," she said hurriedly.

"That's a charming coat you're wearing, if I may be allowed to say so, or perhaps you'd say a 'delightful' one."

While they both laughed, Tina nervously, the laughter did not deter him from continuing his topic, and he asked:

"Are you very fond of fur?"

"I hate it!" she cried, betrayed into an access of venom.

"Surely," he said, looking out ahead, "you don't hate that pretty thing you're wearing?"

"I hate it!"

"Oh!" he exclaimed softly. "Oh, do you?"

They drove on fast. The dull-red flush rose again under Stranger's baked skin, and a half-angry smile turned the corners of his mouth down instead of up. For a while no word was spoken, but the rush of the car against the wind filled their ears with ceaseless sound.

"We're nearly there," Stranger said by and by, as he turned the car through a little dim, gray Oxfordshire village, set down harmoniously under a green hill. "Do you like it?"

"It's deli—— I like it."

They turned up a short avenue of wild cherry trees snowed over with flowers, and stopped before a house whose proportions impressed and enchanted Tina.

"Are we going to have tea *here*?"

"If you don't mind."

"But it's a private house."

"It's mine."

"Yours!"

"I've recently bought it."

They went into a big hall, where a chintz-covered settee was drawn up to

an open fireplace in which logs blazed, and Stranger pressed a bell; whereat a middle-aged woman in a black dress and white apron appeared.

"Mrs. Gibbs," said the master of the house, peeling off his leather motor coat and gloves, "will you take care of this lady? And we'll want tea as soon as she's ready for it."

Tina, intrigued, followed her guide up wide, shallow stairs, along wide, low corridors, to a chintz-hung bedroom, where, on the dressing table, lay brushes, comb, scents, powders, manicure tools, and everything else that a woman's vanity demands.

"I've put everything handy, miss," said the pleasant woman. "Mr. Stranger said he might bring a lady with him to see the house," and she gave the girl a look that whipped the color into her white cheeks, a kind look, but at once curious and confidential.

Combing the fair hair back from her brow, Tina noticed that the dressing-table appointments were all new, unused, and she thought:

"Did he have them bought for me, then?" and the thought scared her as much as the kind woman's searching, yet confidential look.

But Stranger put her at her ease at once, when she had joined him again in the hall, upon the gay chintz settee. Tea had appeared; scones were being kept hot in a silver dish on the hearth; and as, in a slight tremor, she poured out tea, he began talking.

"I bought the house a few weeks ago, because I'm home for good now, and I wanted a real place of my own to settle in. Do you like it?"

Tina uttered her admiration.

"I thought I'd like to show it to you," he said quietly. "I haven't any feminine belongings except a distant cousin or two, and a woman can suggest so many things."

"Oh," she murmured, "but I

shouldn't know anything about your tastes or—or anything."

"Well," he said, "but it's your taste I would be inquiring about, you know, and after tea I shall want a great deal of advice. Meanwhile, won't you take off that heavy coat?"

He laid hands on it, drew it from her, and flung it over a corner of the settee, where for a moment or two his eyes rested on it with a strange expression of antagonism.

The antagonism passed unheeded by Tina. She was drinking from a cup that even her untutored taste knew was beautiful, eating hot cakes, and pouring out tea at the daintiest of tables, just as if—as if—

As if she were really mistress of this desirable house? The thought occurred to, and thrilled, her, and she dallied with it enjoyably, before, in a gust of her new and sorrowful humility, she put it down.

"If he knew about me," her thoughts whispered, "he wouldn't be so respectful—or so kind." Her thoughts flew, then, to the episode in the car, but while it vaguely puzzled, it troubled her not at all. It was just some unaccountable lapse, some impulse immediately regretted, in the perfect courtesy of a perfect companion.

She looked from the windows at the garden, where two gardeners were busy, and caught her breath. Here indeed was the pleasant place of which one said—fictitiously—at Silver's, "I sat all day in the garden. It's looking beautiful." There were trees fringing a smooth lawn, a daffodil glade in the distance, clipped yew hedges, wallflowers in orderly ranks mingling their rich red-browns with star-eyed blue forget-me-not in the beds; at all of which Tina looked and longed, and her longing wrote itself ineradicably over her face.

Stranger saw it, smiling to himself as if secretly pleased, and by and by

he rose and invited her inspection of the house.

"I'd love to see it," she said half timidly, moving toward the door.

Then he lingered behind a moment and dashed the fur coat upon the hearth, where the flames licked at it fiercely and greedily.

"This," he said, opening the door of a very long, empty room at the back of the hall, "is to be a sitting room, and the question is—how shall it be furnished?"

Tina lost her head with the glory of it. Furnishing, with her as with every other woman, was a passion. Up and down, to and fro, she flitted, pointing out this advantage and that, extolling the breadth of French windows opening on to a shady side lawn, and declaring that the room should be blue, "with all this white paneling repainted French gray, and heaps and heaps and heaps of the palest rose cushions—those round, fat ones, you know, as well as plain squares—and silver things, and p'raps a little blue china if you've got it—but I don't know anything about china—and—"

"Come away!" he cried. "I can't carry all that in my head." But he had it in a notebook, although she had not noticed that.

They traversed a short corridor and furnished a dining room in brown and a library in green; and, via a short cut by back stairs, they reached bedrooms which they filled with oak, with white-enamelled wood, with satinwood, until Tina's extravagant fancies wore themselves out, although she still talked on as they descended the shallow stairs into the hall.

A curious scorched smell met them.

The fur coat lay charring to cinders upon the hearth.

"By Jove!" said Stranger after a pause.

She ran forward and lifted the smoky mass in a pair of tongs.

"My—my coat!"

"Your coat! I'm awf'ly sorry!"

"How could it have happened?"

She raised her inquiring look to his face and saw his eyes alight and his lips turned down in an expression she could not fathom.

"It must," he said, "have been my fault."

Still Tina stood looking at the hopeless thing suspended from the tongs, and as she looked, a fierce satisfaction filled her, a relief such as the quarry feels at seeing, behind him, the hunter fall, for the fur coat had pursued her in her dreams.

"I don't care," she exclaimed a little breathlessly. "Never mind, because I really don't care."

"A fur coat is a fur coat, and more, to a woman."

"I hated it," and she dropped her burden and gave a little sigh and a shake as if shaking herself altogether clear of it.

"I apologize thousands of times." His eyes were still alight. "You'll wear one of mine driving back?"

A thrill ran through Tina when he fetched the coat and wrapped her in it and settled her in the car. Her soft cheek brushed against the upturned collar of rough tweed, and loved it; her nostrils found the faint smell of tobacco that hung about the coat, and loved it; and her hands cuddled down, each into the depths of a commodious pocket, and loved them. The whole garment might have been soaked in magic and impregnated with love potions, so exquisite were the sensations that Tina stole from it.

Through a cold and purple evening, miraculously clear and faintly starlit, their wheels turned swiftly once more on the relentless road to town.

"It's been a beautiful day," said Tina to herself, sadly.

Presently Stranger looked at her little white profile and asked, half jealously:

"What are you thinking of?"

"I was only wondering."

"Why? And of what?"

"Nothing definite," said Tina hazily. "Just things."

"Do tell me what 'things' are."

"Well, I wonder sometimes what are the best plans for a girl to make—for her life, I mean. Marg'rete—that's the friend I live with—says it's no use making any plans if you're poor, but you must just live from day to day and take what you can get any day."

"I don't know that I agree with your friend, altogether," he said quietly. "But, all the same, I wouldn't bother my head with plans, if I were you."

He slowed down for a moment so that he could hear her voice.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because there's only one plan for you, and the plan will be fulfilled to absolute perfection."

The car flew on again, and the rush of air by them blew away the questions that formed on her lips. She sat silent and thoughtful, but none the less ecstatic for the life and speed and joy of their flight together through the night.

At the end of a long and rapid run, they entered London and wound through devious ways to Hyde Park; crossed that, and were in Knightsbridge; and Tina was thinking:

"Only Sloane Street now!"

The imminent parting smote her with a terrifying feeling of desolation, of helplessness, of humble dependence upon a possibly malign Fate. She had not yet confidence enough to know that Stranger would take their fate into his own hands or daring enough to seize it in hers.

In King's Road, when they had drawn up, she stood to take off the heavy coat and, lonely without its shelter, waited forlornly on the curb for Stranger to speak the last words.

He said, rather undecidedly and not very clearly:

"Miss Laurie, I want to apologize once more for—that mistake of mine. You forgive me? Thank you. It wasn't exactly a mistake, but—I hope to tell you some day."

She murmured a banal nothing rather stiffly, and he said:

"Just one more thing. You'll allow me, as a matter of course, to replace that loss I caused—that really serious loss of a fur coat?"

"No, Mr. Stranger. I'd rather not."

All at once she could speak with a firmness that could not be gainsaid. But the purpose in his face was not relinquished as he smiled and pressed her hand in farewell.

She toiled up the stairs to Marguerite, who was looking wonderful in one of those expensive toiletts about which her women acquaintances were apt to wax inquisitive. Marguerite was curled, as usual, in the large chair. Her best hat lay on the corner seat, and her silkstockinged feet were bare of shoes, which she had kicked beneath the chair. Her intense eyes fixed themselves speculatively on Tina.

"Supper's ready, dear," she yawned, indicating tinned salmon and bread and butter.

"Have you had yours, Marg'rete?"

"I've dined out, thanks. After the concert we had tea and went into the Park, and he simply wouldn't let me come home, so we dined."

"Where?" asked Tina.

"At Maxim's. It's one of the few little places where Sunday evening doesn't oppress you. Besides"—Marguerite's voice was kind—"he's often hard up."

"Like us."

"M. I thought of you, Tina, as I sat there and looked at Reggie Ferriss. But a man can be happier on tuppence than a woman. And he's only hard up sometimes because he spends like mad."

Tina ate unenthusiastically of the salmon and bread and butter. Her heart was far away, traveling up a cherry avenue to the heaven of a straggling house, dim and gray, planted in the garden of dreams.

"Reggie was quite amusing," Marguerite said laconically. "And he remembered you quite well. Said he must come and look us up, but I said: 'You can bring your supper in your pocket if you do.' It was a lovely evening for walking."

"Yes, I know it was a lovely evening, and it's been a simply *magnificent* day!"

Tina spoke rhapsodically, with big trees and a daffodil glade still infusing her vision.

"So it has, has it?" said Marguerite tranquilly. "I'm glad you've had a good time."

"Mr. Stranger drives awfully well, Marg'rite."

"Hope he makes love awfully well, too."

"He didn't try." A dismaying memory reddened Tina's cheek for an instant, but she repeated stormily: "He didn't try!"

"What?"

"You see you're wrong, Marg'rite. Men aren't all like that."

The girl in the chair reached lazily for the cigarette box from the shelf.

"What did he take you out for, then, Tina?"

"B-b-because he liked me, I suppose."

The match flame played for an instant over Marguerite's smiling, satirical face.

"Tell me where you went and all about it."

"There isn't much to tell. We went into Oxfordshire till we got to the dearest little village called Pagley."

"Where did you lunch?"

"In the car."

"What sort of basket does he get?"

"Marg'rite," said Tina after a distasteful pause, "you're so greedy. You

always want things to be so worth while."

"So it wasn't worth while?"

"Yes, it was! But it was worth while because of the day, and because he's so—so decent, and we talked, and—everything!"

"Oh, very well, dearie, very well. I'm glad you're so satisfied. Now tell me all about Pagley. What did you do there? And why did you go there?"

"We went because he has a house there which he said he wanted me to see."

"What?"

Marguerite drew very slowly and fitfully at her cigarette and, turning to the fire, presented an inexpressive shoulder to Tina. In a moment or two she asked in an equally inexpressive tone:

"Why did he want you to see his house?"

"Oh, I don't know. Does it matter? Anyway, he just did. And, oh, Marg'rite, it's the sweetest place! You go up an avenue of wild-cherry trees bigger than I ever thought cherry trees could grow, and you come to the dear old gray house, with a great hall that has a fire in it——"

"But why——"

"And the garden is simply perfect, Marg'rite! Imagine huge lawns, and lots of trees, and a kind of wilderness where thousands of daffodils are growing. And beyond that one could see fruit trees all in blossom, and greenhouses, and—everything!"

"Tell me who was there."

"Just he and I."

"But——"

"And servants, of course. A housekeeper took me upstairs to tidy my hair, and I went into the charmingest bedroom—all chintz, Marg'rite. We had tea in the hall by a log fire like country houses in books."

"There wasn't a wife, of course? He isn't married?"

"Certainly not!" replied Tina, indignant. "If he had been married, would he——"

"Course he would," said Marguerite. "Married men are often far more in need of distraction than single ones."

"O-oh?"

"Oh."

"I'll go on telling you about the house. After tea we went into every room and pretended to furnish it. At least I told him how I should like it done if the place were mine."

"Did he ask you how you would like it done, then, Tina?"

"Of course, or I shouldn't have told him."

A long pause.

"Those jam tarts aren't bad, Tina."

"Thanks, I'll have one. Did you buy them? How much were they?"

"Tuppence each."

"I'll give you my tuppence."

Another pause fell before Marguerite turned round, with warm cheeks and bright eyes behind wet lashes. She asked with elaborate unconcern:

"Where's the coat Merchant gave you?"

"Don't mention his name!"

"Well, where's the coat?"

"The strangest thing happened to it, Marg'rite. I took it off at tea and left it in the hall, and when we came back after seeing the other rooms, it had fallen into the fire and was burned to a cinder."

Marguerite's horror-struck exclamation was genuine and passionate.

"That beautiful coat!" she kept repeating. "That beautiful thing!"

Tina said, very haltingly and doubtfully:

"Marg'rite, I had the queerest feeling about it when I came back and saw what had happened. If such a thing were reasonable or possible, I should have said that Mr. Stranger—— But it's impossible!"

"What's impossible?"

"That he—— Marg'rite, why should he want to burn the coat on purpose?"

Another exclamation, hastily checked, fell from Marguerite.

"Of course he didn't! He couldn't!" Tina cried. "Only it was placed in safety when I took it off and—— Anyway, what possible reason could he have had for doing it?"

"None," said Marguerite, thinking. "None."

She sat curled in the chair with her bright, hard, and shining eyes fixed upon Tina, and it was palpable to the other that she pieced together in her mind the events described to her, sifted them, and drew deductions.

By and by, she said:

"If he could have known, in some way, how you came by the coat—who gave it to you and why—I could understand that he might burn it, if he—if he——"

Tina leaped up, crying, with her hands to her scared heart:

"Oh, Marg'rite, Marg'rite, but he couldn't know!"

Marguerite finished, regardless of the interruption:

"——if he's so in love with you already as he seems to be."

Her husky voice, heavy, arid with envy, seemed to ache and dry in her throat. She coughed and said:

"I swallowed some smoke."

"He couldn't know!"

"No," said Marguerite, thinking, "he couldn't."

"I should want to die if he knew!"

"You wouldn't die, dear, and I told you so before. We die hard."

"Of course he wants to give me another coat."

"Of course he'll give you one."

"I'd rather not."

"You're morbid," said Marguerite, "morbid!" She went on thinking, her eyelashes dry now, and by and by added, not without vengefulness:

"If he burned the coat because he

knew, I dare say it would be a great gratification to him to replace it with one he had bought for you himself."

"If you think that, I wouldn't look at another coat."

"I don't think it," said Marguerite, regaining her tranquillity, all the richness back in her husky voice, "because it's impossible. I just think that your Mr. Stranger will feel very properly impelled to replace the loss if he knows he caused it, and it will be very awkward for him if you refuse the amends."

"You really think that?"

"I do," replied Marguerite, moving with her languid walk to the bedroom.

Tina followed. She sat down on the edge of her bed and began to unfasten her blouse, with fingers still tremulous.

"Whatever you do," said Marguerite from the dressing table, "never worry over any business because of a man. Don't think seriously of them at all. Don't care that"—her white fingers snapped—"for their lovelorn hearts. Don't care for those appetites they call their feelings. Just trample over them. It's the only way. Yet there you are, shaking like a leaf because I suggest that this Stranger of yours knows what you don't want him to know."

"Marg'rite, it—it would matter to me very much."

"Don't cry. Why would it matter so much, after all? Is it that"—she shook her clouds of hair over her face and was hidden—"you think he's serious enough to ask you to marry him?"

Tina gave exaggerated care to the unlacing of her pink corset, instead of a reply to Marguerite.

"Is it," came the question probing like a needle out from the clouds of hair, "that you want to marry him if he asks you?"

Tina gave more exaggerated care to writhing scientifically out of the pink corset, rolled it punctiliously, laid it on

a chair, and proceeded wordlessly with the business of undressing.

"I don't think he'll ask you," came Marguerite's creamy voice.

"If he's really well off, and well connected, like we think he is, he isn't going to marry Silver's retoucher. You may get a lot of attention from him, but I don't think it'll be more than that. I don't think he's even imagining that you take him so ridiculously seriously. I don't think—"

Tina, from the bed into which she had crept, cried:

"Night night, Marg'rite!" and dissolved into soundless tears.

Before the mirror Marguerite brushed her hair, and if she knew the proud fight for silence that went on upon the pillow next the wall, she gave no sign. She was remorseless.

In the darkness, hours later, she pretended to sleep while she heard the voice near her crying with a soft urgency that pleaded for an answer:

"Marg'rite, are you awake? Marg'rite, he couldn't know! He couldn't know!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Several more of the spring-and-daffodil days passed before Tina heard further of Stranger, and during those days she hovered between a mood of wistful elation and a mood of tawdry despair in which one was apt to cry:

"To hell with everything! To hell with being poor and good! For he's like all the rest. Men are—" and so on, à la Marguerite.

During those days the young photographer Addlebourne mooned about his work with dark-ringed eyes and a sarcastic line of self-derision running from either side of his Henry Ainsley nose to his Henry Ainsley mouth; and he took, as if to show his independence of the gods, inordinate care of his handsome appearance, using more best brilliantine than ever, indulging in a wider

range of neckties, and manicuring his finger nails. He rarely spoke to Tina and never to Marguerite. It was as if he penned them within the limits of his mind as the spoiled and the spoiler; the one pitiable, perhaps, the other possessed irremediably of disease and devils, and both past praying for.

During those daffodil days, too, the great man Merchant came only once to the studio, and was very short with Silver. He would bear with none of Silver's slow, sly smiles, nor the quizzical uplift of his bland black eyebrows, nor the ever-ready innuendo tripping on his tongue. He said:

"Yes, the series of portraits is all right so far, but I want you to get so-and-so and so-and-so, and I want you to work with one of our art editors in future. I've set the thing going, and you'll carry it on. I'm damned busy." And he would have left the studio, on the completion of these curt arrangements, had not the door of the retouching room opened to admit Marguerite into the great apartment where the two men stood together in the center of the parquet floor.

Marguerite came forward slowly, exaggerating her languid grace and infusing a gentle demureness into her manner. But her eyes were as hard as nails and her face as wicked as sin. Only her creamy voice remained soft, and it softened and softened as she began:

"Oh, Mr. Silver——"

"One moment, my dear girl," said Silver, his bland eyes flashing at her once.

Suddenly he had left them, as if on an immediate call or an immediate thought, of which he murmured some incoherent fragment in apology, and Marguerite and Merchant were alone.

There is no doubt that Silver had left her to the task of soothing the unaccountable irritation of the great man, but for once Silver's wisdom was at

fault. Merchant looked at her with a pleasant face, but his steeliest blue lightning playing in his eyes.

"Fine morning," he said with airiness.

Marguerite gasped a little. She could have struck him. But not one of her surging emotions broke through the pink bloom of her cheeks or the guard she put upon her tongue. She replied as inconsequently.

"Lovely. Were you satisfied with the photographs?"

"Oh—ah, yes, thanks," said Merchant.

"Done much motoring lately?" she asked, as he turned away.

"Yes," he said, "yes. A good deal."

Blue lightnings scorched her, and somehow she felt that the man was accusing her. Of what? No matter. She continued more recklessly:

"It's ages since I've seen you."

"Is it?" he said. "Time passes quickly when one's busy."

"And you're busy?"

"Frightfully. Especially this morning, I'm afraid."

He turned wholly away now, and in spite of herself, or, rather, clinging to some hope, she found herself walking with him to the door, although she knew, she felt in every lively sense, that her company irritated and angered him.

She kept thinking to herself:

"But it was I who first attracted him. It was I for whom he first came here; I who——"

She flung herself into the breach of silence.

"My dear man," she chirped, "you're glum. You're simply horrid. What's the matter? What's happened? For I tell you"—the spoiled-darling air, which Tina had imitated so successfully to her rue, here gave her the capricious haughtiness of her type—"I don't allow my men friends to think that I'm to be taken up and put down as the whim

seizes them. You're entirely forgetting yourself, Mr. Merchant."

And he said slyly:

"My dear, I'm in no humor to ask you to lunch. You couldn't cajole, and you certainly can't bully, me. There's one secret known to the wise of your sex—and the wise are damn' few—and the secret is: 'Never hold to a man's coat tails.' But I don't believe you've learned it yet."

He went leisurely down the stairs, adjusting the white carnation in his buttonhole, and she stood at the stair-head watching his arrogant retreat.

She whispered slowly:

"I hate you! I'd like to break you! Oh, I hate you!"

Thick tears threatened the bloom of her cheeks, and hurriedly she stopped them, while some demon within her insisted on inquiring:

"But why do you hate him? Because you're supplanted? Who supplanted you, then?"

Marguerite went back languorously to the retouching room, meeting, on the way, Silver, who shot a sharp glance, but asked no questions. She opened the door and stood looking down with a strange look on Tina.

Tina would not look up. In a little, sharp, broken voice she asked:

"Marg'r'ite, that was—was—Merchant?"

"It was."

"I was—was so afraid he'd inquire for me."

"You think too much of yourself."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean he won't give you a second thought. You messed up his weekend."

"But, Marg'r'ite——"

"You can't take all and give nothing."

"I gave——"

"You've been crying about it ever since."

"Why do you always speak so——"

"So?"

"Brutally—about—about things?"

Marguerite did not answer for a while. She sat down and pretended to test her brushes. At last she said in a blank tone:

"People like me, who've fought the world for years, get impatient with people like you, who expect everything to be so easy."

"I love ease."

"So do I. But I get as much as I can, and you won't, the way you're managing your affairs."

"I've told you before I think I'd like to marry. I think it must be awf'lly sweet to have a home and perhaps a—a baby."

"A thousand-guinea home, at least, and a thousand-guinea income, at least, might perhaps be worth while."

"Or less," Tina dreamed, "or less."

"Oh, it isn't worth marrying for less. It isn't worth marrying to be a domestic slave. Men don't value you if you lose your looks in their service. Men have no gratitude. Men are only faithful as long as they're inclined. You wait for the thousand-guinea home and the thousand-guinea income, and a little car painted and upholstered to suit your best color, and *at the very least* a cook and a maid and a trained nurse for that wonderful baby. Then you could enjoy yourself. Then you'd have simply nothing to do but lunch out and choose your clothes. You could be awf'lly smart, awf'lly *distingué*.

"If I had a husband with a thousand-guinea income, I wouldn't accept a mite less than two-fifty for myself. Oh, I'd be expensive! I'd show him I wasn't bound hand and foot to his house and his socks! Believe me, Tina, men are the most selfish beasts on earth, and take all you can get from 'em is a motto for every woman."

"But he?" Tina mused. "One's husband? What would he get out of it, after he'd paid one's dress allowance

and the servants and one's lunches out and—”

“He wouldn't need much, would he? He'd put in all his time earning the thousand guineas.”

“His married life wouldn't be very—very attractive.”

“Don't you imagine he'd mind that! Men keep the best of their lives away from the family. Men will always have a good time somehow. Trust them! Men are—”

“Did Mr. Merchant ask you out to lunch?”

“No, he didn't. Do you think I care? I'm going to lunch with Silver.”

“Has he asked you?”

“He will, if I wish it.”

While Tina looked, half admiring, through the open door, Marguerite swaggered out into the studio, where Silver was idling. Very brazen and very beautiful she looked, and the *ablerie* of her bearing caught and held his instant attention.

“Mr. Silver, I'm bored to death.”

She posed magnificently against a piece of property.

“What?” he said, with a light scowl, but smiling through it, as if secretly stirred and flattered by her appeal. “Have you too little work, Miss Allen?”

“Too much!” She yawned insolently. “Far, far too much. Mr. Silver, it's a spring day. All the world wants a change in spring. Certainly a poor girl does.”

“What change are you contemplating, my dear girl?”

“Absolutely anything.”

Then Silver laughed his rich, fat laughter and said:

“Come out to lunch and talk to me about it all. A temporary change of admirers, eh? Is that any good to a poor girl in the spring? Come along, come along! It's nearly one o'clock now.”

“And you haven't another appointment till three,” Marguerite said, while

stealthily Tina looked and wondered through the door, “and I have a new hat, so you must take me to the Carlton or Prince's.”

“Anywhere you like,” Silver cried blithely, and he rang down to the porter below to whistle a taxicab, while Marguerite sauntered back.

She closed the door behind her and whispered, full of sparkle:

“You see? Ask. Ask—ask for what you haven't got, always! They'll give it, and when they've given it, ask for more.” And she swung up the new hat—a black velvet plate of a hat—to her silky head, cocked it on one side, adjusted the rather soiled white fox-skin across her shoulders, found white kid gloves—of which she always kept a clean pair in the table drawer ready for emergencies—and left the room, stroking them on tenderly, finger by finger.

From the window Tina watched them drive away in an open taxicab, smiled upon by the gold sun, and is it to be wondered at that she thought again of the values of life, and tossed decisions tremulously to and fro until she found herself, thankfully, back at the one she had started from?

“It isn't safe to play with fire. I've played. I know. And the singed garment is spoiled forever.

“But—it looks so easy, so comfortable, so rich, so lovely, out there in a taxi in the sun, going to Prince's in a black velvet hat and real white fox.

“It's nice, when a girl's very poor, to have presents that help her along—lots of gloves and scent and things!

“Oh, but it isn't safe to play with fire! Directly after, you're sorry, and there's the burn! There's the hurt!”

So Tina also put on her hat, her pink beaver adaptable hat, which she tweaked into the best angles before the tiny mirror, and she got thoughtfully into the frayed black serge coat and white gloves

—not kid, but washable, and worn at that—and she went out alone to lunch.

The laugh of such a morning comforted her somewhat.

"Come along!" the morning seemed to call. "Come along, you little girl. You, too. I've room for everybody, white foxskins or no white foxskins, black velvet pancakes or no black velvet pancakes. And see here, Tina," murmured the sunshine, "I like you, girl. I like your old pink hat and your little old boots and *all* of you. Cheer-o!"

Tina cheered. She went into her usual A. B. C. shop and, eating rather fragilely and fastidiously, thought of a thousand-guinea home—or less, would it be?—where there was a brown dining room and a green library, and a lovely woman's room in palest grays and blues and rose, and a great brown man of unfathomable intentions.

Many times over her frugal lunch did little fair Tina, flushed with dreams, settle the intentions of her brown man, and each time she settled them differently.

But she did not stop thinking of him. She let her thoughts riot on, during the walk back, during Marguerite's late, triumphant return, during the long and drowsy hours of afternoon, and through the drive on a bus top back to the King's Road flat.

There, as she opened the hall door, a surprise awaited her, a surprise full of promise and delight. Two visiting cards lay upon the hall floor, where they had fallen from the letter slit through which some hand had pushed them. With a catch of the breath, she read:

Edward Harden Stranger,
Deemshire Club,
Cherry Hall, Elvers, Oxon.

She handed one card to Marguerite.
"One's for you, I suppose."

"What formality!"

"Here's a letter, too," said Tina,

bending her head over it to hide her warm cheeks.

"For me?"

"For me."

Marguerite swung into the sitting room, with her foxskin-and-best-hat carriage, and in the tiny hall Tina stood ripping open her letter.

CHAPTER IX.

"Marg'rite!"

"I hear you."

Tina ran in, whiter than ever, and with a look of dazed bewilderment.

"Oh, Marg'rite, this letter—it's from one of my relations—"

The big chair usually monopolized by Marguerite received Tina in a gust of helpless weeping, from which she stammered fragmentary words.

"It's to say—to say—"

Marguerite possessed herself of the letter with a sweep of the hand, and read:

MY DEAR NIECE: I am sorry to have to break sad news to you, for which please try to be prepared when you turn the page—

Marguerite turned the page thoughtfully interpolated between the unprepared recipient and the bad news, and read on:

Your father was thrown from the milk cart from the old cob shying just as he was driving out of the station yard, and death took place immediately from concussion. Your mother had one of her heart attacks when the cob galloped home without him, and she died without ever knowing what had happened. Your aunt and I wish to say, my dear, that we would like to be of all help to you in this great trouble come so unexpectedly upon you—

"Poor kid!" said Marguerite. "Buck up! Try not to let yourself go. Let's make you a cup of tea."

She stood uncertainly with the letter in her hand, while Tina rocked and cried in the armchair; and while the sympathy in her rich voice reflected itself, for the moment, in her heart, she

had that strong callousness, or rather imperviousness, of the survivor of many sufferings, the strugger through many losses, which advised her that, after all, old people die sooner or later, that young women are daily left motherless and fatherless, and that the little figure in the chair did not represent the only lonely soul in the great town. She moved about calmly, therefore, in her preparations for Tina's material comfort, and while she collected the tin kettle and the "art" china, she added:

"Tina, I s'pose you're quite an heiress."

"Oh, don't! What do I care?"

"You will care to-morrow."

"T-t-t-to-morrow I shall be d-d-down there w-with them. O-o-oh! How awful!"

"You'll go down to-night?"

"I s-suppose so."

"Well, my dear, you'd better buck up and drink your tea and pack your bag and go."

Marguerite took off the black hat and stood arranging her hair by lifting its crushed weight with a hatpin. An impatience with sorrow, with grief, took her.

"Tina," she said, "people have to bear things. It's part of life. You'd better be quick, hadn't you, if you want to get home to-night?"

Tina took her tea and was better. She felt as if the end of a long and fading chapter had been reached, the chapter of her girlhood, ordered—incompetently, from afar—by the two world-worn bodies that lay in the little world-worn house down in Bucks; and she was ashamedly, half fearfully, conscious, even through her lament, of a rising sense of anticipation.

"It's awful," she quavered, "awful! I don't know that you'd call me an heiress, Marg'rite, but——"

The other girl smiled, shaking out the white foxskin.

An hour later Tina wired her coming

to her uncle, and caught the seven-o'clock train into the country.

She sat over just the sort of meager supper table that used to be spread in her parents' house, listening to her uncle summing up her situation. She thought him strangely unattractive, uncouth; and her past life—into which those two world-worn bodies used to reach out fumbling, blind hands to restrain—had receded back, back, until its impress upon her mind entirely faded.

The uncle said:

"Your mother, as you know, had a bit of money, but it wasn't much, and your poor father, he was a bad farmer, although I'm sorry to say it. But there's a hundred head of cattle, and the wheat's looking extr'or'inary well, and he'd gone in for this new machinery, and the house and land being his—he'd paid off three parts of the mortgage—when you've found a new tenant, you ought to have a tidy income, for a woman.

"A woman," said the uncle, looking rather acidly at Tina, in her V-necked black serge, "didn't ought to need much."

"A woman," said Tina, in a small and stubborn voice backed by the assurance of an heiress, "needs just as much as a man."

"Oh!" he replied. "She didn't ought to. But to go on with the business, you understand that there'll be a valuation——"

For a long while the uncle sat there talking of money, and money attacked Tina subtly, making her feel how great it was, how horrible and how desirable. It twined up to her like a crafty snake, and licked at her like a slavish lap dog, until she could not get away from the thought and the power of it. In bed at last, she wept once more for the elderly man and woman lying in the cold, drear house down the lane, but in the midst of her weeping, she fell asleep and forgot them.

Two dim, bleak days followed, in which the sun went in and icy April rain fell upon the funeral. In those days the uncle and aunt often looked silently at Tina, as if they wondered how a woman thing so alien could have been brought about by the people in the coffins. And the aunt said:

"You've no new black. I should have thought that first thing you would have done when you had your uncle's letter, you being among the London shops, would be to buy yourself some proper black."

"I am black," Tina faltered, touching the frayed serge.

"What you're doing," said the aunt grimly, "is to make your old, everyday dress do for the mourning. You grudge the money; that's what you do."

Tina said to herself, "What ugly thoughts money gives to people," but to the aunt she replied nothing.

She longed to return to Chelsea, to the light and movement, the airs and graces, of the streets. She knew herself what they felt her to be—alien.

On the fourth day, after the will had been read, the trustees advised, and a speedy valuation arranged, she was free to return, and lovingly she and the King's Road met again.

She said: "Now my life's my own forever."

Taking down the "art" china, boiling the tin kettle on the gas ring, she sang while she waited for Marguerite. She arranged a dainty, if bilious, tea table, from wonderful confectionery she had brought in with her, in a paper bag, and she had country primroses for the center. She walked from room to room of the cramped domain, as if it all were new to her, as indeed it was, extraordinarily and spiritually new; and she puffed the cushions and arranged the curtains precisely, and made a little April-weather fire, with logs, on the ashes in the rusted grate.

She looked round her with a smiling

haughtiness, a bubbling contempt, and said:

"Why, I could buy up every stick!"

The rich thought was like a cocktail to the meal of life.

To all this Marguerite presently came back from Silver's, and she did not come alone. A short, burly, and merry young man was with her, who smiled infectiously at the sight of Tina, while Marguerite's brow creased in a tiny scowl.

"Hul-lo, dear!"

"Hullo! I'm back."

"Good!" said Marguerite, throwing her hat and gloves aside. "For here's Mr. Ferriss. He wants a cup of tea. Reggie, my friend has just come into a fortune."

"Oh, congratulations."

"Through her father's will," Marguerite continued.

"Oh," Ferriss began, "I'm sorry——"

"Thank you," said Tina sedately.

She poured out tea, and the sunlight shone on her sleek flaxen head and her pure, untainted skin, and the young man looked musingly from one girl to the other.

It was to Tina he spoke next, with a new solicitude.

"You're just back from—from—he hated to talk of sad matters and steered aside—"from being away?"

"Yes. I've come up from Bucks this afternoon."

"Tina's people," Marguerite purred slowly, "had a jolly place in the country."

"Oh, how nice!" said Reginald Ferriss. "And shall you live there now, Miss Laurie?"

"No. I shall stay in town."

"I thought you hated town, dear," Marguerite purred.

Tina went to the window and, kneeling on the chintz-cushioned seat, looked down into the King's Road and cried:

"I love it! There's a difference between living in London because you

work and living there because you play."

"So you're going to play, Miss Laurie?"

"Forever and ever."

"Amen," cried Ferriss. "That's a sound decision."

He carried his cup over to the window seat and sat by Tina, while Marguerite watched, rather lowering, rather remote and dark, with her elbows on the table and one of Ferriss' cigarettes in the corner of her carmine mouth.

Tina, from the window seat, said with a sober pleasure:

"Marg'rite, to-morrow I'm going to shop."

"Oh," said Ferriss, "let me come!"

Marguerite rose, gathered up the things she had flung down, and went into the bedroom; the door slammed behind her, but while the young man, smiling a little to himself, lifted an eyebrow cynically, Tina remained immune to the other woman's passionate protest. She and Ferriss talked on until the sun went down and twilight dimmed the crazy-colored room to shabby harmonies.

With the sound of the closing of the front door, Marguerite came out of the bedroom in a kimono and slippers and curled herself up in her favorite chair. Another cigarette hung from the corner of her lips, and her heavy-lashed lids drooped sleepily over her eyes.

"I'll wash up, dear," said Tina, returning from the front door.

"Good of you."

"I do want to tell you everything. I'll tell you now, before I clear away the tea things."

"Do."

Tina cast herself upon the hearth-rug, and Marguerite sat above her, watching.

"There's to be what's called a 'valuation,' and my uncle says it will certainly bring in two thousand pounds, and if you invest two thousand pounds

at four per cent, you get eighty pounds a year. We've found a tenant for the farm, and the rent is two hundred and fifty a year. So altogether my income will be three hundred and thirty pounds. Marg'rite, do you hear? *Three hundred and thirty!*"

"I hear."

"Oh, Marg'rite, I shall never go to Silver's again, unless he simply begs me to sit, and then I'll be as difficult as an actress!"

"You're lucky."

"Let's go on sharing this flat. You will, won't you? You'll stick to me, Marg'rite? I should be awf'ly lonely without you."

"Oh, I'll stick to you."

"I'll refurbish. We'll have the sweetest little flat in Chelsea."

"What will you do all day?"

"Oh, lots and lots of things."

"Talk to Reggie Ferriss, perhaps?"

This passed Tina by.

"Marg'rite, has—has Mr. Stranger happened to call again?"

"He happened to call yesterday."

"Were you in?"

"No. I found his cards, as before."

"We'll ask him to tea, shall we, Marg'rite?"

"Do."

"You're awf'ly quiet; you're hardly saying anything. Does your head ache?"

"No."

"You're tired, poor old thing?"

"No."

"I love your new kimono."

"Oh."

"Where'd you get it?"

"I made Silver give it to me. He bought it for a sitter, and I told him I fancied it."

"It's real thick silk, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"You'll help me choose some clothes and some mourning? Won't you, Marg'rite?"

"P'r'aps."

"You have such good taste."

"Oh."

"I'm sure there's something wrong with you, Marg'rite. You're feeling ill or blue—or—or something."

"I'm thinking."

"Do tell me."

"For God's sake, go away and wash up that crockery, and leave me alone!"

That time it was Tina who banged a door behind her, and Marguerite who smiled. In the smile lay exhaustion, the exhaustion of a woman whose inward furies have raged to the borders of dementia.

CHAPTER X.

While Marguerite lay till the last possible moment in her bed, Tina was up early, industriously brushing her hair, manicuring her nails, and sorting her sparse wardrobe. All the while she chattered:

"It's splendid not to hurry. Oh, I feel as if I'd all eternity to dress in! I shall brush my hair two hundred strokes every morning now. They say it's the finest tonic ever thought of. Marg'rite, I shall throw away this blouse, and this thing, and that old thing. I must get new clothes—all black."

Marguerite asked:

"Have you any ready money, then?"

"Uncle gave me some, after I'd persuaded him. He wanted to give me two pounds, 'cos aunt said that would outfit me as far as a frock and gloves and hat. Fancy, Marg'rite! But I got twenty to go on with."

"You won't go on far."

"Oh, I shall have all my money soon. Uncle thinks a woman doesn't want much."

"The simple old man!" said Marguerite. "Did you tell him there's no end to what a woman wants?"

"It's no use. You see aunt and mother"—Tina gulped down a lump in

her throat over the word, now strangely dear—"never spent much."

Round and round her small head she swathed the long strands of hair, and polished the finished dressing with a silk handkerchief, while reluctantly Marguerite rose and trailed to the bathroom.

It was strange, indeed, to part later in Sloane Street, one girl to travel on to the Brompton Road, the other alighting to concern herself with affairs of devastating daintiness and fascination. As Tina hovered before window after window of those small, expensive establishments into which she had often looked without hope of entering, the matter of decision was difficult indeed. And before she had come to any sort of determination, Reginald Ferriss redeemed his suggestion of yesterday and stood beside her, hat in hand. Sloane Street is not crowded at early-morning hours, and from the other side of the road he had marked and followed her loitering figure.

He showed surprise that matched Tina's, crying:

"Why, you're early! I was only coming round to inquire when—"

And she answered, flushed with pleasure:

"And I, Mr. Ferriss, didn't in the least expect that you were really coming."

"If you'll allow me."

"Of course."

"Have you a whole idle day, Miss Laurie?"

"Yes. Have you?"

"I," he said, "mostly idle."

He turned and walked beside her up the warm, bright street. She liked his escort, his cheerful red face and roving eye, and she knew that his blue lounge suit represented the last word in sartorial beauty. They turned, after much discussion, into a little retiring shop famous for artistic conception, where, tremulous and deeply earnest

over such great business, Tina was suited with a gown, a little cunning gown all black and soft, with collar and cuffs of something thin, white, and hand embroidered, which made her look not unlike a child masquerading as a widow. And after this, she was suited, following much eager contention, with a hat to balance the gown, while Reginald Ferriss sat by, advising, laughing, and showing his good white teeth, which contrasted with the brick red of his face.

Never before had Tina paid out so much money for the adornment of her person. Seven guineas—she winced; nine guineas—she gasped; ten guineas—and she had recovered her wind again, and went happily forward. Marguerite, had she been there, would have understood that the lavish purchase of silk stockings went deepest to her heart; and Ferriss, who had the modern young man's critical faculty concerning stockings, guessed it, too, as he sat by and watched Tina running her hand under the fine mesh and feasting upon it like a little *gourmande*.

They walked up Piccadilly together, enjoying the sun and the revel in the air; and Tina was on good terms with the world, for it should be remembered that she had left death far behind her in a bleak green acre, and that she trod upon the threshold of life.

Ferriss thought: "The girl's a darling."

They turned into Bond Street, heading for the French shoe shop, when he spoke of Prince's and lunch. He said:

"I could telephone from the shop for a table, while they're looking out shoes for you. Shall I? Miss Laurie, do!"

At one o'clock they sat at lunch together, charmed with one another. Tina had walked out of the Sloane Street costumier's in the new black gown and hat, and from the French shoe shop in the most expensive pair of shoes she had ever worn in her life, and she had

jumped, with joy, at Prince's for a fitting setting. She tried to feel chastened, as suitable to her recent sorrow, yet somehow could not. The bleak green acre made her youth shudder; she turned away to the many promises that stretched out hands to her, and the hands were warm and livening.

Then, following lunch, a meal light with youthful pleasure, rosy with wine, Ferriss drove her to—innoceit amusement! The Zoölogical Gardens. He suggested, tentatively, a matinée, to which she answered, regretfully and wishing that her grief lay heavier:

"Mr. Ferris, I—I feel that I ought not."

He argued her, however, with sympathetic understanding, into Regent's Park, and they walked about in dilettante fashion, looking here and there, but for the most part talking together as seriously and zealously as young people will; and tea was taken presently among a crowd of children shepherded by bored parents and harassed nurses. As for Regent's Park, its great vistas were magic in evening mist before they drove home, and the sun was setting in a pink fleece that lay for a great length along the flawless sky.

Ferriss ascended the stairs with her, to the flat, and there on the doorstep they found a patient figure, a monument of a man who looked as if he were ready to stand there forever, big, lean, brown, and as well tailored as Ferriss.

It was Stranger.

He carried under his arm a parcel, and he turned a devastating regard upon Tina's companion.

She spoke, out of the thrill that shook her:

"Oh, Mr. Stranger!"

"Can I come in?" he asked.

She let him in, Reginald Ferriss followed, and all three stood within the crazy-colored sitting room. Tina hastened with the introduction.

"Mr. Ferriss—Mr. Stranger."

The men nodded, briefly, and waited.

Tina sat down and slowly drew off her gloves, and the thrill continued in her, making her fair face flush and her blood race. A silence fell, that kind of silence which says louder than words, to one of three people: "You are not wanted here." Restraint enveloped them, and it seemed as if neither of the two men was certain as to whom the silence spoke, until Ferriss, smiling slightly, held out a hand and said:

"Good-by, Miss Laurie, and thank you for a delightful time. I'll let myself out, shall I? Good day." He nodded to Stranger and was gone.

He bore with him the smug, jolly, smiling air of the man who could say:

"I've had my inning—a long one. I don't grudge you, you fellow, the little that's left."

Tina remained sitting in the armchair, smoothing out her gloves.

"I'm afraid," said Stranger hurriedly, "that I've been rather pertinacious; but you know—or perhaps you don't—how much I have wanted to find you at home. Your friend is out?"

"Marg'rite—Miss Allen? I expect she'll be here soon. Do sit down there. It—it has been good of you to call."

"Oh, don't!" he said, smiling. "You've been away?"

She told him simply,

"I had to go home—into Bucks, you know. My father died from an accident, and my mother died of the shock."

Tears filled her eyes at the relation of the sorrowful story, while he exclaimed:

"Oh, poor little girl! I'm sorry. There's nothing worth saying, is there? But isn't there anything in the world I can do?"

She shook her head.

"No, thank you. It's a week ago. We won't talk of it."

She sat silent, while his eyes ranged

quietly over her changed appearance—the gown of simple subtlety, the hat of crafty line, the little, low-cut, high-heeled French shoes, and the gloss of silk stocking over the instep above. Never had Tina looked more frailly lovely.

"I suppose," he hazarded presently, "that you may have to change your plans."

"I never had any plans," said Tina, "and I've none now, except to be as happy as I can. This—this change means that I am—not rich—but that I have an income."

"Are you going to see the world?" he asked, with a sharp anxiety.

"I'm going to stay here for a while—be a rich bachelor and patronize my friends."

They smiled together, and he looked toward the parcel that he had laid on the table.

"Do you know what's there?"

"How should I?"

"I feel absurdly shy about asking you to—It's a fur coat."

"Oh, dear!" said Tina.

Stranger got up to untie the string and produce an almost facsimile—only that it was obviously richer, suppler, and more perfect in design—of the garment ruined so inexplicably at Cherry Hall.

"You'll allow me?" he begged.

"I don't know."

"I should feel very unhappy if not."

"Very well. And thank you."

"Will you," he asked in the manner of man promising himself a pleasure, "try it on?"

She wore it over the black dress, and stood hugging the softness to her, with her hands thrust deep into the pockets, until she caught the light in Stranger's eyes and ran out, crying:

"Wait there! I'll leave it in my room."

In the bedroom she stood among Marguerite's litter of garments and,

slipping out of the coat, she gathered it in her arms and buried her face in it and kissed it over and over. She kept whispering, smiling exaltedly:

"Oh, you *are* a dear thing! Oh, you *are!*"

For some while she stayed there to quiet herself, before she went back to Stranger. He was standing with his back to the room, looking from the window into the twilight King's Road, and she stepped softly beside him before he knew of her return. He started around, taken off his guard.

"Little girl, I was thinking that this is a queer life for you. But I beg your pardon for saying so."

"What is queer, Mr. Stranger?"

"Little things like you living so alone and independently. I don't think it's safe."

"Where and how should a girl like me live?"

For quite a long while Stranger remained hesitant before he asked:

"Is this what you like, then?"

"I suppose so," said Tina, her throat beating.

"I hope," he asked, turning to look down at her with a curious shyness in his voice, "that you liked Cherry Hall?"

"I just loved it."

"The furnishing is being carried on, on the lines you so—so cleverly suggested," said Stranger, looking out of the window again.

"Oh, I'm glad you approved my ideas."

Marguerite's key clicked in the lock, and by mutual consent Tina and Stranger turned away from the window and shook hands.

"When," he asked hastily, "shall I see you again?"

"Oh—some time. Any time."

Marguerite was in the room, staring through the dimness at the tall man's figure.

"No lights!" and she switched one

on. "Oh, Mr. Stranger again!" And she held out a limp hand, while her gaze traveled to Tina, intent on the metamorphosis.

"Indeed," said Stranger, "I feel I've been rather persistent, Miss Allen, but you find me on the eve of departure. And Miss Laurie has borne with me most kindly. Oh, don't trouble, please! I'll let myself out. Good night."

He left the two girls in the sitting room, eying each other. Tina moved away to busy herself drawing the window curtains, and Marguerite uttered, yawningly, behind her:

"I see you've been shopping. Where'd you go?"

"Sloane Street, and Pinet's for my shoes."

"Did Reggie Ferriss go with you, after all? I saw him from the top of my bus, walking down Sloane Street."

"Yes. He came. I lunched with him."

"Oh!"

"We went to the Zoo afterward."

"Baby innocent!"

"What do you mean? You see, I somehow felt I oughtn't to go anywhere really gay."

"What a conscience!" Marguerite walked into the bedroom and from there raised her voice again.

"What's all this—*fur?*"

"Mr. Stranger wanted to replace that burned coat."

Marguerite's laughter rang out.

"Well, Marg'rite, wouldn't you have let him?"

Again Marguerite laughed from the bedroom.

"This is a better coat, Tina, than the other. Pounds and pounds better, I should say!"

"Oh, I hate to hear everything valued in money! Money's rather horrible, after all."

"My dear, it's early days for you to find that out."

Tina sat upon the bed and watched

Marguerite pulling and patting her hair into orderliness.

"You amuse me, Tina. First Addlebourne, then Merchant, then Stranger, then Ferriss—"

With burning blushes and a choked voice Tina cried indignantly:

"Don't, Marg'rite! You speak as if they were all the same!"

"So they are. They're *men*, aren't they? I tell you, my dear, if you expect any difference at all in men's methods in these—let's be pretty and call 'em love affairs—you're fooling yourself."

"I don't believe you can really know."

"Oh, very well. Who is it of the four, then, that's so different from other men?"

Tina saw Marguerite staring at her in the mirror; so, springing up, she ran into the kitchen and began feverishly gathering together the ingredients for a scratch dinner. But with Marguerite's ribald question there had returned to her that thrill, that fear and delight, that harbinger of heaven, to which only one man in her world could summon her heart and senses; and too well for her present happiness she knew, although she would not speak, the answer.

CHAPTER XI.

The life of the bachelor girl free from social or business ties began for Tina, from the very moment she returned to Chelsea from that shivering hour in the dank graveyard down in a corner of Bucks. After the first few lazy mornings late in bed, she had a great access of energy, in which she went ceaselessly here and there, from shop to shop, from play to play. There was so much to see in the beautiful, empty days that succeeded one another, leaving no impression of struggle or hurry. She enjoyed the experience of revolving in the very hub of life, while

the values of time had dropped entirely out of her world.

She spent many hours in the housewifely care of the flat. Never, in the two girls' tenancy, had that dwarfed domicile shone with such polish, such luster. Seated on the floor with needle and bright threads, Tina whiled away many dreaming days in the repairing of the rug that bisected the parquet floor of the sitting room; in the making of a whole set of new cushion covers in Liberty silk; in taking an inventory of china, of pots and pans, cutlery and silverware, and in bringing such inventory up to strength from her own proud purse. The crazy-colored chintzes that Marguerite loved remained, but otherwise, and elsewhere, changes were wrought that kept Tina entranced.

She bloomed, although her eyes were wistful, and in her heart a fearful question whispered inarticulately. Never did the question take cognate form and shape, and never did she speak of it, and hardly could she think of it, but its import was:

"Does Harden Stranger love me?"

He came often; generally, with a careful recognition of the conventions, after Marguerite had returned. But once Marguerite was late, and he sat with Tina on the window seat looking down through the opened casements at the hurry in the road below, and he asked, in the twilight, two questions:

"You remember that day you motored down with me to Cherry Hall and what—what happened?"

"Yes," she said, drawing back.

"Have you—did you quite forgive me?"

"Yes," she said.

"Tina, there's just one thing I should like to say about it, which I wanted to say then. You know, I hoped you wouldn't kiss me when I asked you."

"O-oh!"

"Don't think it over. I dare say I'll be able to explain one day."

Marguerite came in, and when Stranger had left, she asked:

"Are you going to marry him?"

Tina replied, in the twilight that kindly masked her small, pale face:

"I don't think he will ask me."

"Of course not!" Marguerite said in a hard voice. "What do you expect? I told you, didn't I? Oh, you'll see a lot of fun, my dear, and you'll have as good a time as any girl can want, if you like to take it, but when it comes to marrying——"

Sauntering to the door, Marguerite added:

"Marriage is a big question, and take it from me that men think so."

Reaching the door, she turned and spoke again to the quiet figure on the window seat.

"I suppose you think Reggie Ferriss means to ask you?"

"I don't think."

"Oh, yes, you do, Tina. But he won't ask you. Take it from me, he won't."

"Oh."

"You see, Tina, men don't like girls who are knocking around on their own, running about with anybody. I should give up this marrying craze, if I were you. Marriage! Marriage! What is it? A ninety-nine-year lease of a person you may be dead sick of in two months!"

"Some women want to marry, you see, Marg'rite. Some women want a home and children."

"And some women get them," said Marguerite, with a slight sneer, from the bedroom.

Tina remained thinking at the window. It seemed to her that she would gladly marry Ferriss if she could not marry Stranger; that she would happily have married Addlebourne had not she herself barred the way; that she would not unwillingly marry any kind and true and decent man who came saying:

"I love you."

For she was passionately lonely.

In June, she went down to the sea, still lonely. She chose a South Coast resort near enough for Marguerite to join her for the week-end, and gay enough to please Marguerite, too. For each and all of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, Tina walked along the beach and cliffs and bathed alone. Solitary, each evening she dined among merry families, husbands and wives of established standing, brides and bridegrooms looking across the shaded table lights raptly into each other's eyes; and she was lonelier yet. She wanted some one to come saying, "I love you;" to enter his arms and be at rest; to be safe forever with the approved halo of wedlock around her head.

But on the Saturday afternoon Ferriss brought Marguerite down in his little car. They were a gay pair, charmingly dressed, handsome, and looking thoroughly *au courant* with life, and Tina could forget loneliness in such company. Ferriss stayed at the same hotel, with many light and ribald remarks on Mrs. Grundy, and he paid court to each simultaneously—although his eyes had a special message for Tina's—with that insouciance which was his greatest charm.

On Sunday Stranger came, and Tina was radiant. Marguerite said:

"You're stupid. You give yourself away."

They walked together, drove together, and dined together till Monday, when, very early, Ferriss and Marguerite whisked off in the Morris-Oxford, and Tina and Stranger followed at their own time in the bigger car. It had been a giddy, an irresponsible, a completely delightful two days, and Tina returned to London like a rose, with a plan to unfold.

"Marg'rite, let's give a supper party, here, in this flat."

"Whom should we ask?"

"Mr. Ferris and Mr. Stranger——"

"Ask Addlebourne," said Marguerite, wielding her hairbrush cruelly. "I would if I were you. I'd put on my best frock and do my hair well and show him he wasn't the only man in the world. I'd show him there are lots more! I'd ask Addlebourne, Tina."

Before this suggestion Tina sat with a bright flush on her cheeks.

"I will!" she cried defiantly.

"I don't know any girls Ferris and Stranger would care for, or that I care for," said Marguerite. "We wouldn't ask any girl from Silver's."

"Marg'rite," said Tina, "isn't it funny that we know several nice men, but we don't know any nice women?"

"There's a difference," Marguerite replied with laconic wisdom. "You see, a duke might ask you out to dinner if he liked your face, but he wouldn't let you touch the hem of the duchess' gown. Heavens, child, you ought to understand by now."

"Oh, well, I don't care. Marg'rite, let's ask Silver!"

"Let's! It'll be two men each, and that's always fun."

"Marguerite, do you think Silver would come, though?"

"Oh, my child," Marguerite said with a bored air, "you don't know men. Supper in the flat of two girls pretty enough to sit for the show case would draw almost anybody, if his wife wasn't looking."

"Silver hasn't a wife."

"Silver has lots, I bet."

"O-oh? Marg'rite, I'll write the invitations to-morrow."

Tina entered a silk nightdress, the desire of her impoverished days, and slept.

She woke once in the night to murmur rosily:

"Marg'rite, we'll have champagne cup. We'll have ices, Marg'rite. We'll have strawberries—and—cre—"

CHAPTER XII.

The great man Silver laughed when he opened and read the invitation Marguerite had dropped on his desk in the anteroom. Its formality—penned by Tina—he thought deliciously pert. It intrigued him, rather, while he sustained an attitude of indulgent amusement. His rather lethargic affection had always been deeper for Tina than for Marguerite. While the dark beauty had imperiously demanded favors that of habit he had granted, it had been the fair girl whom he had preferred to watch. He liked the white, babyish nape of her neck where the hair was as soft as silk fluff, and he had felt a pleasure in looking at her profile—white youth cut in a cameo. And that angelism of hers—often he had half believed it real.

As he stood fingering the scented note, he found that belief in the angelicism again coming uppermost in his mind. He thought he would like to see Tina again; to inquire about the luck that had enabled her to leave him; to congratulate her on her new liberties; to pat her little hand.

He made up his mind to go. He could see himself buying bunches of roses for the girls, tickling their dear little vanity by an ultra-smart appearance, and presenting himself to be feted at their dear little flat. With a laugh and a flourish he dropped his note of acceptance over Marguerite's shoulder as she sat at the deal table in the hot retouching room.

He said urbanely:

"Awf'lly sweet of you girls! I'll love to come and see you. A party—what?"

"Only," she replied languorously, "a very little one."

Silver, as he moved away, thought he saw the very little one—a *partie carrée*, of course, in which the other fellow could monopolize Marguerite, while he could talk to his dear little

Tina. He hoped that prosperity would not impair the sharp, frail line that gave her profile its spiritual effect; that she wouldn't run riot in clothes; that she hadn't put on airs. He saw himself taking a great interest in Tina, while the other fellow monopolized Marguerite.

On the hot night of the supper party, Silver bought his bunches of roses, groomed himself flawlessly, and presented himself at the King's Road flat. On the doorstep he met Addlebourne, also groomed to a hair, also carrying flowers, and with a jaded and cynical expression on his artistic countenance; but before either could express surprise at the encounter, Tina herself opened the door gayly and let them in.

Addlebourne greeted her without looking, very formally; but Silver looked hard, and he whispered in her ear, as he pressed her hand:

"My dear! My dear! More of an angel than ever!"

"Come in!" she said sweetly. "We're such a crowd."

And in the sitting room, where the furnished supper table had been pushed into a corner, two more men rose from their seats, two men not of Addlebourne's world, nor yet of Silver's, one of whom the photographer recognized instantly and blandly.

Stranger's presence there gave Silver occasion to think a little, but made Addlebourne smile, with that mockery of mirth which expressed:

"What jades women are, and what poor fools men! He, too, then? He, too?"

The young man's savage cynicism, which the defection of one had brought upon the whole of her sex, flung Harden Stranger into the same garish catalogue with Morris Merchant—and many others? With the anger and distrust with which so young a man meets a sentimental reverse, Addlebourne was very ready to believe so.

Stranger and Ferriss treated the two newcomers with a politeness that put any hint at familiarity beyond the pale. Silver was amused a little, and stimulated much. He saw his little Tina in a new rôle—the rôle of a modestly moneyed girl wearing the protecting armor of her money; newly confident, newly wise, and, not least in the swift impression, newly clad. She breathed quite an exclusiveness from the crown of her satiny head to the soles of her Paris-shod feet, and the connoisseur of many beauties valued instantly this exclusive blend with her marvelous angelism.

It was after nine o'clock, the hour for which the guests had been bidden, and soon the gay party sat down at the round table, where a laughing competition began among the men for feminine favors. Even Addlebourne laughed, and defiantly Tina's merriment answered his. She tried to show him, past all contentions, that she cared nothing and thought nothing for him and his; and she showed him. She had him on her left and Stranger on her right, and Marguerite reversed this numbering with Ferriss and Silver. And they drank a very good champagne cup indeed; and there were, after the consommé, the cold chicken, and the veal galantine, ices and strawberries and cream in lavish quantity. And the red geraniums on the table matched the red candle shades, while the roses Silver had brought for both, and the carnations Addlebourne had offered willfully to Marguerite only, flowered in all the available vases.

Afterward it was Silver who took the initiative, sitting down at the cottage piano Tina had hired for her own ineffectual strumming, and catching at all the popular airs, running one into another with a facility and a rattling good humor that brought a whistling accompaniment from Marguerite, and a hummed one from Ferris, while Tina

sat by the open window, tormenting Addlebourne with Stranger and enjoying herself a good deal, perhaps, thereby.

"Now, girls," said Silver, with a Turkish cigarette hanging from the corner of his large, good-tempered mouth, "won't you sing? Margie, sing. Miss Laurie, sing. Come," he coaxed, "come along. We're all yearning to hear."

Marguerite was to the fore immediately, with coon songs, which she sang devilishly well, and Ferriss and Silver took up the choruses. Stranger sat watching and thinking, and presently, when Addlebourne had left the window seat to go and stand sulkily by the piano, Tina whispered to him, under the ebb and flow of the simple, sad, rollicking coon music:

"A penny."

"It's all new to me," said Stranger, speaking softly and turning his head so that he could look into her eyes.

"What's new?"

"This kind of life. Do you like it?"

"Yes." She nodded doubtfully.

"Do you really?" He flicked the ash from his cigarette with a sober meditation, before he added deliberately: "It's very promiscuous, Tina."

It seemed to her every time he used her Christian name that he had fallen into the familiarity soberly and thoughtfully—not like other men, more like a brotherly friend than a would-be lover. All the same, it ravished her each time, and made her inexplicably happy, as if it pointed to an inference of importance that was a very big white milestone on her road.

"I hope," he murmured, "that you don't object to the word."

"No, no. Some people would think it a promiscuous sort of life, I know. But you see, it's *not* new to me."

"No; that's a pity."

"I hate rules," she said in a voice that mistrusted her own statement.

"I don't think you do. Few women

do. They're very helpful, you know; very comfortable."

"Ye-es?"

"Do tell me what you do all day, now you're an independent lady."

She had to confess: "Nothing."

"How charming and diverting that must be!" he said, throwing back his head to laugh softly.

Tina always liked his laughter; it was kind, true, and friendly. She joined him.

"It does sound very awful," she giggled deliciously.

"I expect you'll tire of nothing. People usually do."

"I've been busy up till now doing lots of things I couldn't do before. But—yes—I dare say I shall tire, presently."

"Ah, well, when you tire," he answered, "'presently' will take care of itself. I'm sure a great deal could happen for you 'presently.'" He smiled as if at a thought. "But, meanwhile, Tina, you have exactly what you like? This"—he looked around with a courteously vague glance that embraced the room, the devastated supper table, looking tawdry as raided tables do, and the noisy, if melodious group round the piano—"this is all you want?"

She told a lie in a tiny voice that she half hoped would not deceive him.

"Ye-es. Oh, yes. I'm sure—"

"You'll let me see something of you, won't you?"

She said hurriedly:

"Look, Marguerite's going to sing 'I Hear You Calling.' We must be quiet. We must listen."

Then Marguerite stood alone, while Silver's hands, tender and light, stole into the opening bars of the accompaniment, and she sang in her rich, tormented voice: "I hear you calling me—" while Ferriss and Addlebourne hovered near looking at her, for Marguerite, at her most magnetic, could compel homage from a Plymouth Brother, and Stranger, stirred as men

in love can be by beautiful and passionate words beautifully and passionately sung, looked with his soul in his eyes at the little fair Tina sitting so near him.

Tina whispered to him, without meeting his gaze:

"I love words, don't you? Critics judge by the music, but I love words."

Silver wheeled half round on the music stool and said:

"Now, Miss Laurie, something, please!"

And the others cried: "Oh, please!"

"I can only sing simple things, things you're all tired of," said Tina, and by Silver's side she sang what millions of people have listened to and loved, and superior people who don't matter two cents to the universe have derided:

"When the golden sun sinks in the west,
And the toil of the long day is o'er."

And afterward Silver, singing obviously to Tina alone, broke into:

"Your hair is black as night, *chére*,
Your smile is like the sun."

And, oh, the scarlet of your mouth
Mocks all the magic of the South,
So—don't you think I might, *chére*?"

"And if you ask me why, *chére*,
And plead your gown and pout,
Are not in love and longing curled
The laughing lips of all the world?
And—some day we shall die, *chére*."

Silver had a charming and a facile voice, and while he sang, his eyes became straight and clear like a boy's eyes first looking on life and finding it lovely, and the bland mask of his features melted like ice under the sun. When he had finished, he made a little bow to Tina, got up, and asked her:

"Did you like that?"

"I loved it!"

"Glad," said Silver, "glad!"

He looked lightly round at every one, but more than that light survey worked in his mind. In the glance he took at each, he was summing up Stranger, Ferriss, and possibly, half scornfully,

Addlebourne; and he was coming to a big decision, a decision already born, grown, and matured, although conceived only that evening under the red lights of the round table.

"Reggie," said Marguerite imperiously, "help me to make coffee."

They went out together to the kitchen gas stove and Marguerite said:

"Isn't Tina looking sweet to-night?"

But Ferriss was too wise a bird to say. He replied merely:

"What's the use of asking a man that when he's here with you? Do you imagine he's thinking of some one else?"

Marguerite was hardly appeased, for she was as wise a bird. She said only, with a manner of sulky mystery:

"All you men are *fools* about Tina."

They made coffee, Ferris helping or hindering with his experienced lovemaking. But fluent as he was, he would not discuss Tina, and the other girl knew it. She smiled a little, yet there were elements less mirthful in her heart:

Ferriss carried the tray gayly back to the sitting room, saying:

"Coffee, madam? White or black, madam? Coffee, sir? Liqueur, sir? Cigar, sir?" and fooling according to his habit.

Silver looked on at everything blandly, Stranger tolerantly, and Addlebourne bitterly, and Addlebourne was the first to leave.

Ferriss went next, after a longish interval.

Stranger and Silver sat down as if to wear each other out, although the clock hands pointed to eleven and each must have known that midnight would be too late to stay in the flat of two beautiful bachelor girls. With Stranger, the feeling was an utterly unjustified one that a man of Silver's class should not presume upon the privilege of an invitation given by an exquisite girl, and he was furious with the

jealous, illogical fury that one male has for another in such a situation.

But Silver's feeling was different; it was a purpose, to which, very suavely, but most firmly, he held.

Stranger thought disgustedly:

"Perhaps this bounder will realize that it's time to go if I give him a lead."

But the bounder did not go. He bade Stranger good night with affability and a twinkle in his eyes. He sat down again, after the front door had closed, in the little room, now stuffy and oppressively hot in spite of wide-flung windows; he looked at the clock, from that slowly to Tina, and thence to Marguerite.

He said tranquilly:

"I suppose you girls will soon have to turn me out."

Marguerite had no stupidity in her, and Silver knew it. He had relied on that slow, glancing look to give her the cue to his desire, and like a woman of worldly talents as she was, she took the cue.

"Tina," said she slowly, "I'll begin to clear away. The woman'll never get that lot off for breakfast in the morning. If Mr. Silver will excuse me collecting just one trayful—it's Mr. Silver's fault for staying—I'll take it to the kitchen."

With her piled-up tray Marguerite moved out. The door closed behind her, and then the kitchen door. The little gaudy room became strangely still, with the stillness that every attractive woman has sensed and recognized, feared or loved.

Tina and Silver were alone.

TO BE CONTINUED.



SONG

VELVET sky and satin sea,
Jeweled points of mystery,
Stars, an opalescent moon—
This my memory of June.

Satin skin and velvet hair,
Laughter on the perfumed air,
Starshine eyes of ocean blue—
This my memory of you.

You and June forever seem
Just a part of one deep dream.
Wake me, tell me, is it true
I am one with June and you?

LEONIE A. F. BISPHAM.



Will Power

By Bonnie R. Ginger

Author of "His Chance,"
"That Morbid Whale," etc.

IT was very simple. The Perkinses had gone.

Others had gone—aye, very nearly all of them—but except in a vague sense they did not matter. Only the Perkinses really figured with Toby. And now he stood on the piazza of the boarded-up bungalow and, without the aid of facial expression, mourned his annual fall loss.

It came of school, this loss. Toby hated this mysterious power which, every year, just when the air was at its finest and the sea at its fullest, sent its tentacles up and down the land and, with its noiseless clutch, withdrew the summer's gift of companionship and adventure and life. There was a school here, of course, but in its tinniness it had nothing to do with Toby's hate. He meant the city school, that vast force which he had even come to think of as a sort of octopus, a huge educational head, hungry and goggle-eyed, with uncountable reaching arms, endless, sinuous, suctorial. Its lair—to his imagination—was Boston; its balefullest reach extended here to Beaford Pool; and its most innocent victims were the Perkinses. And now it had reached again and drawn them in, and he was alone for the winter. And winter at Beaford Pool was seven months long.

His whole name was Tobias Henry Bodge. He was thirty-seven years old and a clean six feet high, and in fea-

tures he was much like the headlands of his own Maine shore. His nose jutted nobly, his complexion was that of a sandstone cliff at sunset, and his hair resembled the bayberry bushes that grow atop that cliff. But there the analogy really ends. Most of all, he was like a dog—as like as his name. Like a dog's had been his first shy prowlings about the Perkinses' yard when they had come to summer-neighbor him seven years ago; doglike had been his gratitude when they had—figuratively—fed him bones and stroked him. It was not the capering gratitude of a pup, but rather the mature inward passion that must prove itself by service.

And the Perkinses, multitudinous and waxing, always adapted themselves to such devotion; always there were young children he could guard, always older children he could take in the dory, always young grown-ups with venturesome deep-sea ambitions, elderly relatives consulting him on the weather—and always there were stomachs to acclaim his gifts from hook and lobster pot and net.

In time he had become as much an institution with them as they were with him. He appeared at any hour of the day, in his sweater and cap and high boots, and some one would see his wistful, doglike eyes, and "There's Toby!" "Hello, Tobe!" "Hey, Tobe, we're

"waiting for you!" would be the cry, and he would come up to them, sighing happily by way of wagging his tail.

For that—above all, that—was the wonderfulness of the Perkinses. About Beaford Pool he was known as the fellow who could not talk, but the Perkinses never seemed to notice his inarticulateness—literally, they did not seem to notice. And when at times he did grow into speech, they accepted that fact as unphenomenal, too; so that, with the lapse of years, he had finally developed a sort of power of utterance when with them and effectually dissipated any impression they may have secretly entertained that he did not have good sense.

Once, one winter, they had got him up to Boston. He had stayed four days. The youngsters maintained that he would return some day—particularly Edie and Eddie, the twins.

Edie and Eddie! Why, those kids had grown to the inside of his dory this summer, like a couple of barnacles! He looked down at it, the dory, where it snuggled in the cove below the bungalow. It, too, seemed to ask: "Where are Edie and Eddie?"

Toby shook his head. His gaze wandered over the little shingle beach that lay like a gray tongue between fanged jaws of rock, drooling black seaweed. Up and down the shore, other rocks, toothed like carnivores, snapped at the sky. Outside, the sea was blue, sailless.

Useless, useless! What he meant was the calm and even summery beauty of the scene. With a heat almost July's, yet in its very serenity the atmosphere spoke to him of winter with a distinctness beyond that of the grayest sky's or the bleakest wind's. His face did not mirror his feelings, but there was a droop to his big shoulders as he started down to the dory—which, after all, was his solace, since it shared his loss with him. He thought he would row out a bit, and from beyond the

ledges contemplate unmolested the lemon-colored cottage that housed his sad memories.

As he was pulling out of the cove, he was hailed by a man in a motor boat that came suddenly around the rocks. Toby recognized Nat Willard, who had come to Beaford Pool only the night before. Every one knew the eccentric little old fellow, a citizen of Boston, and also owner of the perpendicular horror called "Gullwing Grange" that overlooked the point. He rented it of summers, coming up himself after his tenants were gone and by his movements creating a sort of little Indian summer of excitement for the natives for a couple of weeks or so.

"Tobe, have you seen my niece around here?" he called in a high, impatient voice, upraising himself like a sort of gray bird in the prow. He was gray-haired and bearded, gray-sweated and gaitered, his ruddy face with its beak nose making the only color note about him.

Now, Toby not only had not seen the niece, he had never heard that there was a niece. Willard had a young son, with whom he was reputed to have quarreled over a matter of career, the son having elected to be a doctor, when the father expressly wished him to be a lawyer. But as for a niece— In fact, in his bewilderment, Toby was unable to make reply at all, and Willard, impatiently tossing his hands, turned the motor boat about and set off up the Atlantic.

Toby had got so far as to pull at the forgotten oars when he was once more plunged back into mental darkness by hearing his name again—not the first, but the surname, and spoken, not in a male, but in a female voice.

"Mr. Bodge!"

On the repetition, he roused himself and looked about. On the ledge near by, in the lee of a rock, a small figure was crouched, as if in hiding. As

Toby had now quite desisted from rowing, the dory drifted right against the rock, and bobbed there on the unnaturally surfless tide.

"Please don't tell Uncle Nat I'm here! I don't want him to find me," said the small person.

Looking up awkwardly, Toby saw that she was not, as he had first fancied, a young girl or a girl at all. She was something nearer his own age, although the smile she suddenly bestowed upon him, rather nervously, took off five years at a stroke. He had a confused impression that she was elegantly clad and that her nose was very burned. It was quite clear that she was thin.

He did not return the smile. Indeed, his features were stern, but that was from embarrassment. The lady suddenly bent over and displayed a sketch she was making.

"My uncle doesn't like me to do these things. But I want to do them, and so I was hiding."

She seemed to hope that he would credit her with honorable intentions, but his face remained forbiddingly stern. All at once the lady blushed.

"I suppose you wonder how I knew your name?" She laughed a little, anxiously.

As a fact, he had been wondering, although he did not know it. She bent a little farther toward him.

"I'll tell you. I heard some one talking about you last night—a young lady from that yellow house up there. I don't know who she was, but you were out here in your boat, and she said you were Mr. Bodge, and that you were the best rower at Beaford Pool, and that all her family thought the world of you; they wouldn't know how to spend a summer here without you. She was a nice, sociable girl, but she said they were going away to-day. I'm sorry. She was so nice." And the little sketcher smiled again, expecting some acknowledgment.

But Toby merely uttered some strangled sound, while his expression became like dull red paint on a block of wood. Only his eyes betrayed something of the emotion her words evoked. They glowed like a collie's.

"Tide's coming in," he stammered suddenly. "You can't get off the ledge."

And the lady, looking about, saw that she was separated from the next ledge by a good four feet of water.

"Oh, my!" And she stood up instantly, but sat down again, for she had glimpsed the motor boat above the point.

"Tain't no matter. I'll take you in, if you want to stay a spell longer."

He did not look at her as he spoke, his gaze going no higher than her feet, which were shod in silly pumps, devices for sudden death among such rocks as these. In truth, the rest of her costume but reiterated the atrocity of unsuitableness, not only to the place, but to herself, the dress attacking the hat, the hat making reprisal on the dress, and each at the same time engaged in lively internal warfare; while she somehow suggested the helpless country for which, and on which, these hostile raiments contended. There was about her just such an air of asking how it had all begun and what in the world it could mean.

"Well—thank you, Mr. Bodge. But I don't want to trouble you——"

"Tain't no trouble. No trouble at all. But I'll come back, if you'd ruther. If you'd ruther go on painting pictures," he added awkwardly, and in excess of delicacy looking as far away from the "pictures" as he could turn his eyes. "Besides," he went on, as she was silent, "it's dinner time, anyhow. I have to go to dinner."

"Dinner!" She instantly began to gather her sketches. "Then I'll have to go, too! I always forget meals!"

Her tone indicated that the delin-

quency was usually reprobated. But it was only later that Toby remembered what she had said; just now he was achieving an unusual feat.

"Well," he stammered, rumpling his hair under the cap brim, "I was going to say I can bring you back here after dinner. You don't need to wait for the tide to go out. You can leave your pictures right here, if you're a mind to. I'd just as lief bring you back." And I doubt if even a Perkins would have recognized him as he made that remark.

Without further demur, she got into the dory, and he rowed solemnly and expressionlessly in. Once he added to his impressions, however. She had pale-gold hair, rather thin, and very small and passionately honest eyes, their gray somewhat deepened by their proximity to her highly burnished nose.

They were crossing the grassy bluff when she turned to him.

"Of course you know Uncle Nat's a queer one?" she said.

He nodded.

"Well"—she laughed nervously—"about that hiding the pictures—You see, I love rocks and surf and little pools with starfish in them and round stones and the funny stuff you find on the beach—and I like to make those pictures, too. There, you see what I am—just a plain-out old maid! And that's just why I can't please Uncle Nat all the time. I have to get away and be what I used to be when I worked for my living and had vacations at the shore." She looked up at him, but he was still quite expressionless. "I suppose—I suppose you've heard Uncle Nat inherited me?" she asked.

His mouth opened, but it was quite a minute before he said: "No."

"Oh, I thought every one knew! Yes, he disinherited his boy Fred, and made me his heir. And I wish he hadn't!" She sighed, then smiled and held out her hand. "Well, good-by till after

dinner. You're so kind and nice to take me out again, Mr. Dodge!"

She turned toward Gullwing Grange, and he went back-lots-way to his sister Susan and the waiting dinner.

Susan made it obvious that she was waiting. She stood in the doorway, her hands under her apron. For forty-two years Susan Dodge had thriven on spinsterhood, and gradually she had achieved—or perhaps perfected—an imposing similitude to a large gray block of her own Maine granite. She fairly wedged the doorway, and though she did not move, there was yet something almost cosmic about her, which was the inner urge of her noonday appetite. As she watched her brother's approach, her eyes glinted like bits of mica. She had a distinct beard.

As remarkable as her eating was Susan's talking—or, rather, her ability to intermingle both feats, so that, like the juggled oranges in the Stevenson essay, neither was for an instant overlooked and yet neither dominated. And while she demolished one food, she eyed all the others about her with a smiling gleam of anticipation.

This skill of hers was the more notable to-day, because, while being unusually hungry from having waited, she also had important tidings.

"Nat Willard's here, Tobe. Yes, he came down last night, Miz' Littlefield was telling me. She was over to get my pickle r'seet. And he brought a niece with him—and what do you s'pose? He's going to leave her all his money. He's going to disinherit his son. He's quarreled with him again, and so he's adopted this woman—Miz' Littlefield says she's thirty-five if she's a day—and he's got her here, and they're going to stay two weeks. He brought his motor boat, too—I expect you seen it; he was out in it—he brought it from Gloucester. He's got a cook and a housekeeper and a chauffeur—and this here niece. It does seem funny no one ever heard tell

of her before, 's many years as he's been coming here. Miz' Littlefield says she's a homely little thing, all dressed to death and like she wasn't used to it, nuther. Tobe, try this corn. It's offle sweet."

"She ain't thirty-five," said Toby.

The contradiction brought Susan up roundly.

"You seen her?"

He looked fixedly into his platé.

"Yes." And feeling her eyes boring him. "On the ledge."

"Well, Tobe, I guess Miz' Littlefield's a better judge of women's ages than you." Thus she ruled out his objection. "And say, Nat Willard'll want some lobsters. You know how he always wants 'em right off. You better get there before Lem Googins gets there. You better go up right after dinner."

Without listening, he nodded.

Two hundred "natives" properly populated Beaford Pool. That is, they were indigenous citizens, and most of them had never been anywhere else—to speak of. The pool was really an island, save for a narrow ribbon of land leading to the mainland, and in winters mostly impassable.

Fifty years before, a certain old original named Erasmus Dodge had been the owner of more than half of the place. If you know New England—the far New England—you understand something of the industry known as the making of wills. A Maine will is as distinct a product as a Maine apple or a Maine barn or a Maine stand o' pines, with this difference, that the apples and barns and pines are, respectively, all pretty much alike, whereas the wills have the rich variety and amazing resourcefulness of the scenery itself. A typical will will show you lakes where the legal sailing seems clear, but where, in a squall, the boat can sink to unfathomed deeps; fair valleys of legacies whose fertility assures eternal contentions; sharp rocks where

shins are cracked; steep hills down which unwary legatees fall into bogs from which they never emerge. There are barren wastes of clauses where nothing grows but the sardonic juniper and the glacial débris, pathless woods where lawyer, executor, and heir alike are lost for good and all. And, if the will maker be a real genius, he can blur the whole topography of his masterpiece with a fog of conditions, or bury it ten feet deep under a snow of threats. Such a will was that of old Erasmus Bodge.

To Toby and Susan, after their mother's death, descended the squat little house and the acre of sand here, on the same conditions that had hampered and lured her. The place could not be rented or sold or altered. The heirs could not marry or go away. With the house went a monthly income of forty dollars, shared by Susan and Toby now, but forfeit by either on violation of any clause of the will. This will is preserved in the county courthouse and reads like a romance. But its effect on its heirs was not to invest them with the spirit of romance. It was deadening, like predestination.

Susan did not know this, for she seemed completely satisfied with life on such terms. But her brother had never shared that smug complacency. He yielded to the terms, sometimes passively for long intervals. But there were always periods of reaction, when he battled like a man in a nightmare, when he even believed he would go away—yes, even in spite of his sister Susan; that is to say, in spite of the fact that he could not wake to real action, because from his cradle the will had been a drug administered to him daily and hourly. And Susan was the keeper of the bottle and spoon. Under her watchful care, he was doped with the pitiable safety that went with the little white house and the paltry income that attended it with such a

stifling regularity. He was safe, safe for life, like a barnacle on a ledge. And for all that, he had never lived.

But every fall, when the Perkinses went away, these rebellious struggles set in. And such a struggle was beginning now.

He watched her as she devoured and talked. He watched the processes of her calm voracity, the relentless complacency with which she rended and chewed, and there was something hypnotic in that vast appetite of hers that related her to the sea as it came in on the rocks. The sea wrought by centuries, imperceptibly—she visibly and expeditely. But their object was one—demolition and absorption.

He did not go to Nat Willard's about lobsters. He went down to the cove, and when Nat Willard's niece came, he rowed her out to the ledge, and then, while she continued her artistic employment, he pulled out beyond the rocks and fished.

The niece—her name was Alice—was not in hiding now, her uncle having gone to Portland. She had communicated that much in her half-nervous, half-frank way, and also she had said:

"If you don't mind, I'd like to paint you and the dory some time."

And while he said nothing to this, it may have had something to do with his choice of an anchorage near by, and with the fact that, while fishing, he sat quite rigid and, after making an occasional catch, at once resumed the pose. And indeed, in time he was rewarded by her summons, and rowing in and joining her on the rock, beheld the fruit of her talent. There was the dory, colored to the life, its name, *Edie*, plain on the hull, and there was he himself, unexpectedly small, but still himself, blue tie and wine-red sweater and fish-line overboard.

She showed him also other sketches she had made elsewhere. He had seen hand-painted pictures before, but

none like these. There is no need to deplore his awed admiration. It came from his soul, and souls, like bodies, creep before they walk. The point is to have one.

After that, she fell to talking.

It seemed that the business of being an heir was not quite simple. Her uncle had his own notions of the matter, and they were disconcerting.

"He wants me to wear expensive clothes and to go shopping and entertain company and pour tea and forget my old life—that's his idea, forget my old life. But, you see, that's like forgetting an old friend, and it's hard. I worked, but I was free. And now I'm ashamed to think what I'm doing. It doesn't seem right. You've seen his son, Fred, haven't you? Well, then, you know what a nice boy he is. He ought to have all this money; he'd do good with it—more good than the missionary society. That's where it will go if Uncle Nat doesn't give it to me, and Fred says I'd better have it than they."

Toby ruffled his hair, pondering. It was a missionary society that stood ready to receive his legacy and Susan's, if they violated the will.

"I'd like to reconcile them," went on Alice thoughtfully, "but uncle won't even let me speak Fred's name. And yet it shows what character the boy has, preferring to live his own life to all this money he could have! Of course I haven't any character, or I'd not be here in Fred's place. I'm not proud of it, I tell you, Mr. Bodge." And then, after an embarrassed, whimsical pause, "It's queer how I'm telling you this, anyhow. I guess I feel sure you understand."

Whether she said it subtly or only ingenuously, it rendered Toby quite speechless. The Perkinses had understood *him*—at least apparently—but they had never suggested that he might understand them. But then did their lives involve any predicaments, as Alice

Willard's did? In any case, the idea of being needed morally, so to say, was something very new and agreeable, and not to be grasped all at once, of course. But mingled with it was something uncomfortable, too. "I worked, but I was free," she had said. And he had lowered his eyes as she had said it. And he did not forget the words.

A little later that same afternoon, he rowed her over to the "island," where she gathered round pebbles in her silken skirt and got her feet wet by falling from a rock. But when finally she started homeward along the bluff, Toby had proposed, and she had agreed, that she should go with him out to his lobster pots at sunrise next day.

Reaching home, he went straight up to his room and there, first shutting the door, produced from his sweater the picture she had made of the dory and him. On the margin was written uphill: "To T. Bodge from A. Willard." Even now he could hardly believe it was his.

The Perkinses, true, had given him presents—all of them and always. But about this small sketch was some quality not present even in the wristers Edie had knitted for him out of the wool from her Belgian shawl. The wristers were the work of Edie's own hands, the gift was from her heart—but this picture was a work of hand and heart and brain. In brief, though he only groped at the distinction, it was creative.

His concealing it was not from shyness. It was due to something he had felt before now, but more definitely now—a need to have something apart from Susan, to possess something solely in his own right, and that meant in secret, since whatever she knew about, she either shared or controlled. She could not share this, since she could not appreciate it, but she could and would take command of it, hang it in the parlor, show it to callers. It would

cease to be his. And yet it was something more his than anything else he owned, and he knew that if she so much as glimpsed it, it was as good as de-spoiled.

There were reasons why the odd friendship progressed unnoted. On the one hand, Susan was busy pickling, and, besides, the house did not front the sea. On the other hand, Nat Willard was constantly up the ocean in his motor boat, the *Gullwing*, of which he was inordinately fond. The weather had come on unnaturally balmy, so that the natives were looking for a gale, but Alice was using the golden moments to vast artistic advantage, partly because she loved the sketching, partly because it helped her to forget the trials of her position, which was evidently becoming more difficult; or, rather, it was her conscience that was becoming more active—as she explained to Toby.

"I keep on thinking of Fred, and how unjust and spiteful it is of Uncle Nat! And, besides, I don't *want* the money! I thought I did, but I don't. I don't know how to act with it. I wasn't made for it—*his* money, I mean. If it were something I'd earned! You see what I mean, don't you, Mr. Bodge?"

He did not answer. But so often he did not answer. The really significant fact, and that which enticed her further into her odd confidings, was the way in which he always pondered what she said, even if she uttered only jokes—which, like most humorless persons, she was fond of making; in which case, he would grope for the point, and if he found it, chuckle in the depths of his big chest.

But when she spoke of her uncle and the money, he never chuckled.

Four or five days passed, and he developed new ways of showing his attachment—the word applying to that canine quality of him already referred to—daily and obvious loiterings in the

cove, half-strangled profferings of the dory and other entertainment, and even the gathering of round stones, which he set up in this cove and others in little mounds for her later visitation and selection; also the discovery of rock pools and their little unmolested aquaria, and of vantage points that he considered suitable for sketches. And once or twice they walked along the deserted beach below the concealing dunes, where her soul, half-childish, half-spinstershish thing, rioted in shells and seaweed and the cast-up mysteries of the dreaming, smiling sea.

Then, one day, she suddenly curtailed her visit to the cove. If Toby had known women better, or if he had ever seen Susan cry, he would have guessed her recent occupation. She poked in the sand, cheerlessly exhumeing clams, but the conversation dragged.

"If I had the courage of a fly!" she cried out once. And a bit later, "He's that kind of a man, if he looks at me, I back down!" And then she added, "He's got company down to-day. I've got to entertain them." And lastly, despairingly, "They're from *Boston!*" And she left the cove.

Toby went out in the dory that day, miles from shore, and remained till night. But he brought home no fish.

That night Susan very calmly and inexorably brewed him a stout physic.

"Tain't no use saying you ain't bilious," she declared. "You ain't been eating good for three days, and I know just what you need, but I been so busy pickling I didn't tend to it." And she disregarded his denials and left the medicine on his bureau. "It always makes you well," she said with superb finality, complacent about both diagnosis and prescription.

Next day Alice came to him in a state of flagrant rebellion. Indeed, the tears were hardly dried in her much-redened eyes.

"I shan't stand it very much longer, Mr. Bodge, I tell *you!*"

"Has he been pestering you?" asked Toby, standing by the dory, bait bucket in hand.

"Pestering!" She wiped her inflamed nose truculently, as if it shared the opprobrium. "He says he's going to have a woman come here to show me how to act like an heiress! Think of the humiliation! I won't stand it! He can take his old money and do whatever he likes with it, but he can't bully me any more! I'll go away!"

Toby put down the bait bucket. He was not looking at her. She came up to him and touched his arm.

"Mr. Bodge, you've been a friend to me, and I believe you can help me. If you'd just say to me, 'Yes, you're right. You oughtn't to take his money. You ought to go back and do the work you used to do, that you like to do, because it's useful work, and be independent and useful and free!' then, Mr. Bodge, I believe it would give me courage to go right back to Uncle Nat and tell him I was through." And her red eyes were upon him eagerly.

He stood for a long moment like a wooden man. All at once he uttered a strange, inarticulate sound, and without looking at her, he turned abruptly and strode across the pebbled beach and was gone.

For a moment she was so hurt that she only stared after him, open-mouthed. But even as she was casting about for reasons for his behavior, a voice from behind hailed her so sharply that she wheeled in alarm and confronted her Uncle Nat, glowering down at her from a rock like a gray and angry hawk.

"Alice! Is it possible you've been picking up an acquaintance with Toby Bodge?"

The fact that he could not have heard what she had said gave her courage.

She set herself against the ledge like a wren at bay.

"Why not, Uncle Nat? Why not?"

"Why not? Good Lord! Don't you know who he is?"

"Well, who is he?"

The old gentleman flapped his hands impotently.

"Oh, heavens! I might have known! Not only the laziest man and the biggest fool on the place, but a damed ignoramus that lives with an old-maid sister that bosses him like a dog and walks on him like a doormat. And he lets her do it because it keeps a roof over him and twenty dollars a month for life! Alice," he added, in the tense tones of final exasperation, "Alice Willard, I want to ask you if you have the vaguest rudimentary comprehension of what your position demands?"

With her back against the rock and her hands behind her, she drew a long breath and met his eyes with hers, look for look.

"Yes, uncle," she said, and turned and walked away.

That afternoon the uncanny warm spell came to an end. The sky turned gray, and the natives said the gale was coming at last.

Susan had to admit a temporary defeat, unless, as she suspected in spite of his denials, Toby had not taken the medicine. That night at supper he was sunk in a silence that she defined as sulks. But she was not discouraged from conversation. It was not in her capacity to respect such a fancifulness as the privacy of thought.

Once she observed, however, that he had desisted from his food and was looking at her fixedly, but she was called to the kitchen by an odor of burning and forgot the look until he repeated it somewhat later, when he had finished and had pushed back from the table. Even then what really arrested her was the fact that he did not light

his pipe. Then he stopped looking at her and began to gaze about the rooms peculiarly. He was observing the tasteless litter of them, the fireless bleakness of them, save in the kitchen, where the fat stove squatted under its simmering vats, a black altar sending up its faithful incense to the household god. Then for the third time he bent his gaze upon his sister.

That gaze presently disrupted her placid sentences. He was given to long starings, but this had in it something unfamiliar, something detached and at once studying and shrinking.

"My sakes, Tobe, what on earth has come over you these days?" she exclaimed at last.

He started and drew back.

"Nothing," he said at last. Then, later, "The wind's rising. I'll go fix the dory."

He was gone a full hour, while in the warm kitchen Susan washed the dishes to the accompaniment of the growing gale. When he came in, he avoided her intercession and went at once to bed.

Well, it had come—the gale out there—and it companioned him, almost like a friend. Like the storm's, were his own gusts of fury, when he believed that he could batter down every obstacle, could cast Susan from his path like a hurled weight—Susan and all the crushing ponderousness of that cowardly, worthless safety of his that lay under this tight little roof and came each month to him in the paltry sum that was his while he stayed under the roof. Then there were reactions, lulls, when he saw superlucidly the unfamiliar perils of a life begun out in the great unfriendly world by a man un-equipped, moneyless, and shy and stuttering. Then his courage sagged back and his heart clattered like the pebbles down on the shingle beaches in the coves. No, he couldn't go—how could

he? There, to put it plainly—how could he?

But even in these retreatings, there was still, away down in him somewhere, a far, little, questing voice that said, "How can you stay? How can you stay?"

Then he would see his little friend, the awkward, brave pebble hunter, the gatherer of seaweed scalps, the star-fish trapper. And from that picture he inevitably leaped forward to another, where he saw himself after he had really gone. And he was not with his old friends, the Perkinses; he was with Alice Willard, and she was at work, and he was at work, though he did not know what work, either hers or his. But they were busy and happy and free. That was it—free.

As the hours wore on to dawn, there came this difference between the two struggles—the one outside, the ocean struggle, grew; the one inside abated. One had no sunrise; the other had.

Then, in the rays of his coming freedom, he slept.

It must have been mid-morning when he was wakened by Susan's pounding on his door. Last night he had locked it.

"Tobe! Tobe, get up! Nat Willard wants you, Tobe! Get up!"

She always commanded him, but something in her tones, pounding like her fists to reach above the gale, made him leap from bed. One glance at the bit of sea beyond his window explained the mystery of Nat Willard. Nat's boat, the *Gullwing*, was beating herself to death on the ledge. Toby dressed at once and came down the stairs with his sweater half on.

In the little hallway Willard was dancing on his gray-gaitered legs in a frenzy of excitement. He waved his hands at Toby.

"Tobe, you've got to help! The *Gullwing*'s going to break if you don't! The guards can't help. There's a

schooner out there, too, damn it! And I've got to save my boat! You're the man, Tobe—you know it! And you'll go, won't you?"

And the old gentleman darted at him and began fiercely patting him on the chest, with trembling, foolish palms, as if he would shake the slow answer out of him.

"Well—" said Toby, and ruffled his hair.

Willard let out a sort of hysterical squeal.

"Tobe, you know you can row! Good God!" He whirled on Susan. "He'll go, won't he? Won't he, Miss Bodge?"

For once, however, Susan herself was experiencing an indecision. An obsequious desire to oblige—with a view to a likely reward for Toby—was companioned by a fear of the ocean out there. She coughed.

If they had known it, Toby was not hesitating. He was only thinking. And even while Susan believed that she was doing that thinking for him, he turned on her a strange, long look, in which—though she did not know it—there was something triumphant, something gloating and laughing and shouting.

"I'll go, Nat," he said simply.

The old gentleman sobbed with relief, and pulled Toby toward the door.

The sea was breaking savagely over the ledges, and where it came in to the Ovens, the spray soared thirty feet over the bluff. There was a vicious drive of rain.

"That damned schooner!" squeaked Willard.

The schooner was trying to make around the point, and the life guards were keeping ready if she failed. Toby judged that she would just get by.

As they clambered down to the cove, a little figure sprang from the lee of a rock and intercepted them with little wild, wet hands. It was Alice, hatless and drenched.

"Uncle Nat! Shame on you! It's only a boat! And you can buy another! Look at that sea!"

With surprising suddenness the old man seized her.

"Shut up, you hussy! You go pack your things and go! Don't you come here interfering with me, you ingrate?" And he thrust her against the ledge. "Come, man, come!" he shouted to Toby.

But Toby stood in his tracks, looking at Alice.

"You going—away?"

She drew up, victoriously.

"Yes! Yes, I am!"

Then, with the old man clinging to him like a sort of frenzied crab, Toby bent close down to her.

"Me, too!" he said.

She saw his eyes then. She put out her hands and touched him.

"Oh!" And then swiftly, "But the sea!" And she gestured surfward, terrified.

He pushed Willard aside and bent closer.

"I got to—I got to do something! I feel that way, like I could—" He clenched his fists. "Don't you see?" he gloated.

A moment she gazed up at him.

"I see," she said. "I do see!" And their hands clung together an instant.

Then he was striding down to the dory, Willard stumbling alongside, hanging to him as if he feared an escape. They got into the dory and put off.

Alice, watching, saw the dory creep from the cove; saw it tossed to the clouds and dropped like a stone aimed from a hand; waited seconds till it came up again, a little farther on. That was all, really, over and over—the dory falling out of the sky or being pressed up from the floor of the ocean, but always a little farther on, toward the *Gullwing*. Then, when aeons had passed, she saw the *Gullwing* being edged off the ledge,

and next, by processes too far and too adroit for her comprehension, the motor boat was under its own gasoline and pulling out from the rock jaws, with the dory trailing empty behind. So the two made off around the point, just as the schooner shaved the outermost ledge and sailed around the shore to the inner harbor and safety.

Alice had just changed to dry things when Susan reached the Grange.

She, too, had watched the rescue of the *Gullwing*. Now, guessing that Nat Willard would bring Toby back with him for a dose of the warming fluid he was known to keep, she meant to be present at the settlement of the expected reward. For Willard—and the trait made him distinctive thereabouts—was a generous man in such matters.

In the big surfward living room, the two women took each other's contrasting dimensions. Alice noted how, for all Susan's vast and lithic personality, she did not press the little hand that came out to hers, but remained inert, fishy, while the mica glint of her eyes was disconcerting, in spite of the wideness of her ingratiating smile.

"Yes, I'm Tobe's sister. I saw you watching them."

"Wasn't it magnificent, your brother's rowing?" cried Alice.

"Oh, Tobe can row all right," said Susan, and with that concession dismissed her brother as a topic and entered upon discussable matters.

Thus, for half an hour, Alice had the advantage of the illumination. Shy as she was, accustomed to take people on faith, yet she had times when her instinct was surer than many a trained observer's; and this was one of the times. And all unconsciously, Susan complacently laid bare the hard core of her nature, the soulless domination of her brother, and the monumental selfishness that was the sole guide of her spinastral life.

By the time her uncle and Toby arrived, Alice understood.

The brew was brought forth, and the two men, drenched, but victorious, imbibed it before the blaze—Uncle Nat standing, or rather strutting restlessly, while describing the great event, and Toby upright on a chair, legs crossed, staring straight into the flames. But at times he lifted his eyes, bashful and yet exultant, for just one glance at Alice Willard near by. Each time he did this, she was looking at him.

"Well, well!" concluded the old gentleman at last, tearing his mind from the *Gullwing* and gulping down the last of his drink. And at that moment he became conscious of his niece. He reddened with instant indignation. She prepared to defend herself, but he changed his tactics and turned to Susan.

"Here's a pretty pass, Miss Bodge! My niece going away, and your brother, too! A nice going-on! Don't you say it is?"

"Going away?" repeated Susan, without the remotest approach to understanding him. Toby stopped drinking his toddy.

"Oh, Toby—that's his business! But my niece, that I brought to my home, to inherit my fortune—yes, Miss Bodge, going away, by God! She has the ingratitude! And the idiocy! Going to work, she calls it! And she could have had my money! Not a cent will she ever see of it now, and well she knows it, or she'd better!"

How delectable this titbit would have been to Susan if her mind had not suddenly set itself upon another—an infinitely more grotesque and impossible suggestion! There flashed upon her Toby's moods and actions of the last few days, baffling her diagnosis and her physic.

"Toby, where are you going?" she asked distinctly.

He uncrossed his legs, recrossed them, and looked into the fire.

"Away."

Susan did not exclaim. She sat perfectly still,* but her gaze, in its moveless intensity of scrutiny, might have been a basilisk's. At last he did squirm under it, but at the same moment Alice's hand was on his shoulder, with just a touch. He drew a deep breath and stood up, facing his sister calmly.

"Susan, I'm going away. For good. I'm sick of the sea. I'm—" He raised his big hand, groping as if for the words to explain all that had become so clear to him, and then remaining wordless after all, dropping his hand. "I'm—going."

"But good Lord!" ejaculated Nat Willard. "He'll lose his income and his shelter, and he hasn't any trade. And, man, what will your sister do? Haven't you thought of your sister?"

In that room there were three silences—Susan's, which was baleful, Willard's interrogative, and Alice's trustful. Toby turned to Alice, as to his strength.

"Susan'll have the house and her twenty dollars a month. After a while, I can send her some, if 'tain't enough."

Susan rose quietly. There was something under the glacial deliberation of her, a heaving of that granite breast that spoke of flames below fiercer than the flames here in the roaring fireplace. She opened her lips to speak, but at once shut them again, and they fitted together in a straight, implacable seam. And so, without a word, she walked from the room.

There was the sounding thump of Nat Willard's hand on Toby's shoulder.

"Hey, Tobe—by God! You're a man, and I beg your pardon! And for saving my *Gullwing*, I offer you a job in Boston! You can be my chauffeur, if you'll learn to drive a car as you row a boat, and there's my hand on it."

"Oh, uncle, *uncle!*" cried Alice, and rushed at him with wide arms. "And now, to end up with, you'll forgive Cousin Fred?"

"What, what?" he exclaimed testily. But he did not push her away. In fact, presently he began to stroke her hair. "Well, I don't know. I don't know! The obstinate rascal! But I don't know! You're all obstinate rascals! Here you are, swearing you're going back to work——"

"Yes, oh, yes, uncle! I want to! I love it!"

"There, you see, obstinate and selfish! I might as well give in. I suppose you and Toby will end by getting married. I don't know what else his following you to Boston can mean."

"Uncle Nat!" exclaimed Alice.

But her uncle only grimaced maliciously and started up the stairs.

"Remember, Toby, she doesn't get a cent of my money! Not a cent!" And with a twinkle of his gray gaiters, he was gone.

"I'm going back to work!" began Alice loudly and rapidly, but Toby stood before her, fumbling his cap.

"But after I get to making money, would you—— Do you——"

"Oh, well——" she stammered, twisting her thin little hands.

"Huh?" he quested, urgent.

"Yes, I do, Toby. I will!" And she buried her face in the woolen depths of the wine-red sweater.

"Say, Alice," he asked suddenly, "what is it you do? What is your work?"

"Why, didn't you know? It's teaching, Toby—teaching school."

He stared at her, speechless. All at once he threw back his head, and for the first time Alice heard him laugh.

It may have been the first time he ever had laughed—like that.



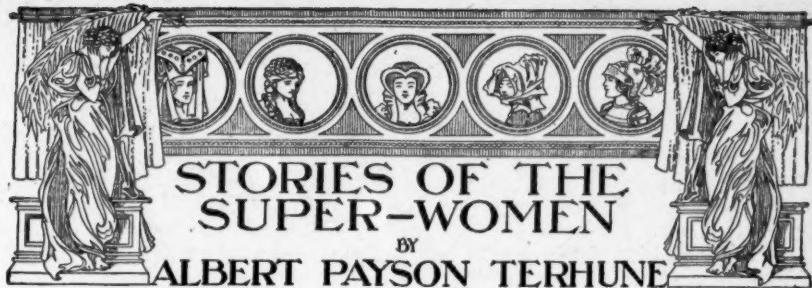
AMBITION

FLOWERS are growing at my feet;
I have jewels on my hands—
Rose rubies, emeralds,
Pearls in whitest bands;
And on a branch above my reach,
A wild bird sits and sings—sweet beyond speech!

Why should the eye of a wild bird
Shine brighter than a ruby is?
Why should the perfume of a flower's kiss
Grow fainter where that song is heard?

Flowers and jewels have I all!
Flowers I pluck and jewels wear;
But the wild bird comes not at call!

LUCIA CHAMBERLAIN.



What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poictiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

MARIE DE BRINVILLIERS: THE WOMAN WITHOUT A SOUL

THIS is the story of a woman who would be best forgotten, if she were not unforgettable. She was Marie Madeleine Marguerite d'Aubray, Marchioness of Brinvilliers.

You've read "The Three Guardsmen," of course. Two characters, in that most glorious of books, stand out forever in the memory—D'Artagnan and Milady; the former in a glow of romance, the latter as the ideal she-devil of fiction.

A wonderful character was Milady—the incarnation of subtle charm and deadly heartlessness. Dumas would have deserved vast credit if he had evolved her, but he didn't. He drew her, to the life, from Madame de Brinvilliers. And he admitted that he got in part the germ of D'Artagnan from her false sweetheart, Des Grais.

Dumas, in his "Celebrated Crimes," tells her story with a delightfully

shameless wealth of detail. Conan Doyle has also written of her; and so has many another author whose fancy was enchanted by her strange character and stranger exploits.

Perhaps you will let me follow afar off—in the footsteps of more interesting writers and tell you about her.

Her father was Antoine Dreux d'Aubray, Seigneur of Offemont, councilor of state, lieutenant civil of Paris. He was very rich, and he had a wife who could not make her morals behave.

He and his occasionally faithful wife had four children—two sons and Marie and another daughter. What became of his wife, I don't know. She was the only member of the family whom Marie did not try to kill—including herself.

Marie was born in 1630. They gave her a remarkable education, for a woman of that century. History, the classics, languages, and a half dozen

other studies, she mastered. But she afterward declared that she had never had an atom of religious or moral training.

The mother who neglected these needful branches of the girl's education took no pains to curb Marie's violent temper and arrogance, or to guide her iron will or her tireless energy. Neglected in all she should have been taught, she grew to womanhood as she chose. And she chose truly devious ways. Some of her youthful exploits, recorded later in her confession, are beyond all belief. Dumas touches on them. I shall not.

Suitors were many, for Marie's lure was of the true super-woman type. At twenty-one she married the most aristocratic and worthless of her cloud of wooers—Anton Gobelin, Marquis de Brinvilliers, descendant of the man who started the Gobelin tapestry works. The marquis was a spendthrift, a rake, a gambler, an all-around ne'er-do-well.

At the time of the marriage, he still had an income of thirty thousand livres left out of his original fortune, and Marie brought him a dowry of two hundred thousand more; quite a tidy sum for a young couple starting house-keeping. But, undaunted by its size, they heroically set themselves to the task of spending it. And by tireless industry they succeeded in going broke. They had help, of course, in their self-chosen task, for they entertained lavishly, and Marie's charm drew scores of admirers, who helped keep the château full and the purse empty. Brinvilliers was colonel of a Normandy regiment. His fellow officers were Marie's loving slaves.

Several of these martial gallants are credited with receiving more than neighborly kindness from the pretty marchioness. And one of them—Gaudin St. Croix, a lieutenant in her own husband's regiment—won more than

her passing fancy. He speedily became the love of her life.

There were other lovers, of course—plenty of them. Like Musette's, each of Marie's loves was a verse in her life song. But St. Croix was always that song's refrain.

He was a dashing young Gascon officer, quite without honor or scruple. He boasted a noble lineage, forgetting to add that the lineage was left-handed. And he worshiped the fair Marie Madeleine Marguerite d'Aubray de Brinvilliers.

Here is a word picture of Marie, by the way, sketched by an old French chronicler:

"Her figure was small, but exquisitely rounded. Her well-formed face was charmingly delicate, and her features the more regular as, never affected by an internal emotion, they seemed like those of a statue, so much so that everybody mistook her cold and cruel impassibility for the serenity of a pure mind.

"Nature had blessed her with a fascinating air of childlike innocence. Her eyes were large and blue and limpid. Her speech was elegant, and her manner graceful and gentle. But hers were the narrow face, the receding forehead, the straight and hard-compressed mouth that would seem to mark the physiognomy of born poisoners."

St. Croix had no money, but he had no objection to using Marie's, and she had still less objection to letting him spend it. His influence over her was all but hypnotic.

Brinvilliers saw how matters were going, but he did not greatly care. His wife's dowry was nearly gone, and he faced the dread certainty of having to support her out of his own dwindling patrimony, if they should keep on living together. So, when she asked for a legal separation, he graciously consented. This left Marie free to carry on her affair with St. Croix as openly as

she chose, so far as her kindly indulgent spouse was concerned. And she availed herself of the chance.

But if her husband was fashionably complaisant, her father was not. Old D'Aubray's experience with his sainted wife had made him unduly bitter toward that sort of thing, as perhaps I have said. When he learned of Marie's scandalous affair with St. Croix, he went to her husband about it. Brinvilliers disclaimed any power over his wife, and said that, since they were now living apart, he washed his hands of her.

So D'Aubray went to Marie herself. She told him that she was now a married woman, and that she was accountable for her actions to no one but her own dear husband. She went on to hint tactfully that her morals did not concern her strait-laced father.

D'Aubray thought otherwise, and he took his troubles to the king, Louis XIV. Louis was strong on morals—for other people. Marie's indiscreet conduct made him very indignant. He gave her father a *lettre de cachet* for Monsieur Gaudin St. Croix, consigning the latter to the Bastille for the term of one year.

This custom of issuing *lettres de cachet* was very convenient indeed, except, perhaps, to the persons whose names were on them. The *lettres* were warrants issued by the king, by means of which a victim might be seized anywhere in France, on no charge at all, and cast into a cell at the Bastille or at Vincennes, without the ceremony of a trial.

Unless some term of time was mentioned in the *lettre*, the captive was forced to remain in prison "during the king's pleasure." The king usually forgot the whole business, and the prisoner lingered on in his cell until he died, unless some powerful influence were used to get him out.

For example, when the Bastille was

torn down, several old men—one or two of them quite imbecile—were found there. No one knew who they were, how long they had been there, or what crime they were supposed to have committed. They were victims of *lettres de cachet*.

Almost any nobleman of good standing at court could get the royal signature to a blank *lettre* and could then fill in the name of whatsoever enemy he might wish to put out of the way. Fathers also had a habit of using these *lettres*—usually on a time schedule—for the correction of unruly children.

D'Aubray had followed this course; not on his unruly daughter, but on the cause of her unruliness. He turned over the *lettre* to a provost marshal, with a hint as to the easiest way of catching the much-wanted St. Croix.

Meantime, Marie and her adorer were enjoying life to the full. There was still a little of Marie's dowry left, together with the money and jewelry lavished on her by lesser lovers. So existence seemed very pleasant to the enamored pair.

One day, as their carriage drove across a Paris square, it was halted by a file of soldiers. Out jumped St. Croix, to find out why they had been stopped. An officer touched him on the arm and announced that the questioning and questionable youth was under arrest.

St. Croix tried to bluff. He asserted his rights and demanded to know the charge against him. The officer drew from his belt the *lettre de cachet*, and showed it to him.

At glimpse of the dread parchment, St. Croix went deadly pale. But all he said was:

"The warrant is for me alone. I beg you will let this lady drive on unmolested."

The Bastille was rather full when St. Croix arrived there. (According to popular rumor, it was always jammed

to the doors, and almost every one in France who happened to disappear was supposed to be in captivity there; which was convenient for would-be absconders. Yet, a little over a century later, the supposedly overfull fortress was found to contain less than ten prisoners in all.) St. Croix, owing to the crush of guests in the Bastille at the time of his arrest, could not have a cell to himself. So he was lodged in a dungeon that already had an occupant.

This cellmate was a tall, thin man, black of garb and ghastly of face. He introduced himself as "Exili." At the name St. Croix cowered in fear. For Exili was all too well known in Paris just then. He was a man of mystery, an Italian by birth, about whom hung the glamour of black magic.

He was perhaps nothing more than an unprincipled chemist, who assumed mystic airs to impress people. On the other hand, he may have been almost anything. He was credited with being in league with Satan and with knowing more about subtle poisons than any mortal man had a right to know.

Exili had been banished from Rome, as a suspected poisoner. He had had a meteorically brief career in Paris. And now he was cooling his heels—and presumably the rest of him—in a commodious cell in the Bastille.

A year is a long time or a tragically short time, according to the way one spends it. In prison, we are metrically told:

Every day is as a year,
A year whose days are long.

And Exili and St. Croix hit on a way to make the year-long days pass more rapidly and pleasantly. Exili proceeded to give the Frenchman a full course in the art of poisoning. He taught St. Croix the secrets of subtle poisons that were unknown to the public pharmacopœia of that time. He

taught him how to compound such poisons; how to administer them without detection; how to prepare antidotes for each.

Much may be learned in a year, if teacher and pupil have no other occupation except to instruct and acquire. Moreover, the subject fascinated both St. Croix and Exili. Their studies went on, day after day, month after month. When, at last, St. Croix was set free, he was an expert poisoner, as far as theories could make him so. All he lacked was the actual practice that makes perfect. And already Exili had taught him how to obtain that.

Poisoning was an art as old as the Bible, and long before Exili's time, doctors had learned how to detect the ordinary toxics in the human system. For example, if a man were seized with horrible pains just after a meal or a drink, and died in agony a few minutes later, the medical profession would gravely declare that he had been poisoned, and swift justice would follow. Occasionally, quick injustice followed, as when some one died suddenly from acute gastritis or from ptomaines.

But the poisons with which Exili familiarized his pupil were of a sort that science could not yet detect by an autopsy. Nor did they kill with any suddenness; their action extended over weeks of time. The basis of these poisons—like the Borgias—is supposed to have been arsenic.

Out into the world of freedom, at the end of his prison year, went Gaudin St. Croix. But he emerged a far different man from the carefree and merrily vicious youth who had entered the Bastille. A year of Exili had wrought a curious change in his whole nature. He had gone to prison a light-hearted parasite. He came out a coldly calculating monster.

While her lover was in the Bastille, Marie had devoted herself most tenderly to her father. And she had suc-

ceeded not only in winning D'Aubray's forgiveness for her frailties, but in making herself utterly necessary to his comfort and happiness. He was certain that she had reformed. He took her back into favor, gladly supporting her and lavishing upon her the asinine wealth of devotion that an elderly man is so prone to save for the most despicable of his daughters.

Straight to Marie hastened St. Croix, on his release, and she received him with open arms. The old affair was resumed, just where it had been broken off. Only now the lovers were too prudent to let the trustful old D'Aubray guess their secret. He supposed Marie had forever turned her back upon St. Croix. He had every reason to think so, for she had told him so herself.

St. Croix hated D'Aubray for that year in jail. Also, he knew that D'Aubray was very rich and he wanted to enjoy some of the old man's hoarded wealth. So he proposed a very clever scheme to Marie.

He told her of his newly acquired poison lore and suggested that D'Aubray's death would be a financial gain and a general relief to them both. Marie willingly agreed. Together they began to put into practice the lessons St. Croix had learned from Exili.

Marie proved an apt pupil. She learned as quickly as a Chinaman. Soon she and St. Croix were ready to get rid of D'Aubray. But the laws against poisoning were uncommonly severe, and neither of the plotters cared to go to the scaffold. So they resolved first to try out the effects of their poison on some less dangerous subject than the man whose death they were planning.

Accordingly, Marie began to display a sweet taste for charity. Daily she visited the hospitals, carrying along broths and jellies and fruit compotes that she had prepared with her own hands. These she distributed to the

sick, and the unfortunates grew to look forward eagerly to her daily visits, and to call down blessings on her as she passed along the wards.

But the same recipients of her dainties did not call down blessings on their benefactress for any great length of time. Such patients had a strange trick of growing gradually worse and worse and at last of dying in dreadful anguish.

Marie bent over their deathbeds, a smile of heavenly pity on her cameo face, breathing words of heavenly comfort to them—and carefully noting their symptoms.

D'Aubray was overjoyed that his daughter should atone for her crimson past by such deeds of charity. But he feared she was working too hard, so he carried her away to his château near Compiègne for a needed rest.

There the rugged old man fell ill. Marie, in a transport of anxiety, nursed him night and day, allowing no one but herself to prepare his meals or his medicines.

For three months D'Aubray lingered on. During that time—as her confession recorded—Marie gave him no less than thirty-five carefully graduated doses of the poison she and St. Croix had concocted.

When he died, Marie's grief was pathetic. It touched the heart of everybody—except her elder brother, Antoine. Like many brothers, Antoine had never been able to enthuse overmuch over his sister's display of emotion. He did not trust her. He said so, quite openly. In fact, as chief heir to the dead man, he ordered an autopsy.

The examination was made by thick-headed Paris doctors, who had been trained to see nothing that lay outside their own narrow field of medical study. They found no trace of poison. Antoine was not convinced, but he could do nothing.

Marie inherited a slice of her fa-

ther's big estate; a comparatively small slice, consisting of a sum of money and a country place, but enough to keep St. Croix and herself in luxury for some time.

They lived in wild extravagance, and presently the ready cash was gone. Marie's inherited country house was seized by bailiffs to pay the debts. St. Croix had contracted in her name. In a fit of fury, she went to the house by night and set fire to it.

This act may have soothed her rage, but it did not bring in any new money, and the couple were in sore straits. So they cast about for a way to get hold of more.

Antoine was married, but childless. He and her sister and her younger brother, François, alone stood between her and all the enormous fortune her father had left.

Marie tried to poison her sister—a good and gentle girl who later became a nun—but for some reason the attempt failed. So she decided to leave her sister until the last. The two brothers had the lion's share of the property, anyhow. And if they were out of the way, she and her sister would both be very rich. And it would be time enough, later, to dispose of the sister.

But there were drawbacks in the way of poisoning Antoine and François. Neither of them felt toward Marie that simple faith which, Tennyson assures us, is better than Norman blood. They would not let her come near them. If she poisoned them, it must be at long range.

St. Croix had a valet, La Chaussée by name; a very capable fellow who had helped his master in several minor poisonings and who had shown decided talent along that line. Marie now had La Chaussée introduced into her brothers' household as a kitchen servant, first giving him full instructions.

The valet prepared a pigeon pie, one day, for a quiet home dinner, to which

the two brothers returned half famished, after a hunting trip. Antoine and François divided the pie between them.

A little later, Antoine—who had the heartier appetite—fell ill, and died after a four-day sickness. François lingered on for three months; then followed his brother.

There was now no immediate need for Marie to kill her sister. She had quite enough wealth, from her share of her brothers' estate, to keep her rich for years.

But now trouble sprang up in her path. St. Croix demanded larger sums of money than ever before, and demanded them far more frequently. Also, La Chaussée clamored for his own share of the spoils, blackmailing the marchioness for greater amounts than she was willing to pay. She foresaw that her whole fortune would vanish into the pockets of these two worthies unless she called a halt—and she called it. Whereat, they combined against her, threatening to tell the authorities that she was a murderer.

In the quarrel that ensued, she stabbed St. Croix. But the wound was not dangerous. In stark desperation, she then tried to poison herself. But she repented of her rashness and saved herself by an antidote.

All of which is sordid and sickening, and serves to rip away any false romance from the woman's crimes.

Then came an unexpected release from one of Marie's two persecutors, release that brought a still worse peril upon her.

St. Croix used to experiment constantly with new poison formulæ, helped by Exili, who had somehow got out of prison. St. Croix was bending over a new concoction of deadly chemicals in his laboratory when the glass mask that he wore to protect himself from the poison fumes slipped from his face. He did not notice that the mask

was no longer in place until he had inhaled the gases that rose from the deadly brew he was mixing. He fell lifeless, killed by his own poison.

The police searched his rooms. Hidden there, they found a locked casket. On it was a letter, in St. Croix's handwriting, which contained a request that the casket be delivered, unopened, to the Marchioness of Brinvilliers.

At the same instant, Marie came hurrying into the room—having just heard of St. Croix's death—and besought the police to give her the casket, offering them thousands of livres for it.

The police doggedly refused the bribe—I don't know why; but they did—and the casket was taken to the Hotel de Ville. There it was opened. In it were found many packets of poison and a damning amount of evidence against both Marie and La Chaussée.

Marie, meantime, had prudently fled to England. By way of revenge on the blackmailing valet, she did not warn La Chaussée of his peril. He was arrested and put to the torture. He had the soul of a true servant. He confessed everything, at the first twinge of pain. His confession was duly written down; after which he was as duly put to death. Exili vanished. Never again could trace of him be found.

Marie was gone, but her private papers were not. And these the police found. Among the documents was a full confession, written and signed by her, telling, in detail, of every crime she had ever committed, from earliest childhood to the hour of her brothers' murders.

Why the woman had written this confession it is not for a mere man to guess. Perhaps as a compromise with conscience; perhaps to create a sensation after her death; perhaps to avenge herself on St. Croix and La Chaussée; perhaps through morbid self-castigation; perhaps to while away a rainy afternoon.

The King of France was just then all powerful with Charles II. of England. Marie's extradition was demanded, and was promptly granted. But, prompt as was the granting, Marie was still more prompt. She fled to Belgium, one lap ahead of her pursuers, and took refuge in a convent there.

And in that convent she was absolutely safe, for, from earliest days, a convent or a monastery or a church was sanctuary. A criminal, fleeing to any of the three, could not be dragged out by the officers of the law. Such a seizure would not only have been unlawful, but would have brought down excommunication on the sanctuary's daring violators. Marie was safe. Her pursuers were blocked at every turn.

And here is where Des Grais comes into our story.

Des Grais was a young Parisian officer, daring, brilliant, resourceful, a fighter of duels, a breaker of hearts, a hero of reckless adventures. Personally, I think he was a cur.

Several fellow officers of his were discussing Marie's cleverness in escaping from French justice. They prophesied that she would never be recaptured.

"I will wager ten thousand livres that I can capture her and bring her back to Paris inside of a month," boasted Des Grais.

Before the words were fairly out of his mouth, a dozen men had taken the bet.

A week or two later, a young abbé arrived at the Liège convent. He met Marie and was at once struck by her loveliness. He did not try to hide the impression she made upon him.

Life in the convent was dull, and Marie had begun to find it unbearably stupid. She welcomed with delight the presence of the handsome youth. His respectful adoration of her beautiful self stirred a responsive chord in her

heart. She had spoken with no men except elderly priests for months.

Coyly, she led him on. But he was bashful—unused to the ways of women—an ignoramus in love affairs. All this was doubly interesting to Marie, who had become surfeited with the attentions of blasé men of the world. Here was a most refreshing novelty. She became less coy. From pursued, she grew to be the pursuer.

But the abbé had religious scruples. Within the hallowed walls of the convent, he would not so much as kiss her hand. He said it would be sacrilegious to let secular love enter so holy a dwelling.

In vain she tried to overcome his scruples, and all the time she was waxing more and more interested in this novel type of adorer.

At length, the abbé shyly suggested that he was going for a walk that evening in the little strip of woodland just outside the convent walls, and he asked if she would consent to meet him there, for just a single minute, in the moonlight.

The poor fool accepted his proposition. The idea of a moonlight meeting in the forest with this handsome and bashful adorer seemed to her the acme of romance.

At moonrise, she stole out of the safely stupid old convent and into the woods. The abbé was eagerly awaiting her. As she came toward him, he sprang forward and caught her rapturously to his breast.

Then, still holding her tightly, he blew a whistle. In a second, four French policemen had surrounded and manacled the shrieking woman. Des Grais, tossing aside his black robe of an abbé, coolly directed the proceedings.

Back to France started the captors and their captive. Only once during her arrest and handcuffing did Marie speak. Finding resistance useless, she all at once grew calm. Turning to the

exultant Des Grais, she said, in quiet contempt:

"I congratulate you, monsieur, on your skill in bringing about my capture. But your method in doing it will draw down upon your head the scorn of all men of honor!"

Though, outwardly, she was resigned to her fate, yet she had not yet given up the struggle. On the first night of the journey from Liège to Paris, a gendarme named Barbier was detailed to ride at her side.

Speaking in a whisper, Marie began to talk to him. Exerting every atom of her nameless charm, she sought to seduce him from his duty.

Des Grais, riding ahead, looked back and saw the two in conversation. Immediately he ordered another guard to ride beside Marie in Barbier's place. But not before she had scribbled a note to a swashbuckling adorer of hers—one Theria—begging him to raise a rescue party to overcome her escort and set her free.

She had induced Barbier to promise to desert the party, gallop ahead to Paris with this letter, and deliver it to Theria.

Des Grais made the fellow give up the note and sent him to the rear. But by this time Marie's second guard was listening raptly to her whispered pleas. She was begging him to kill Des Grais and carry her away. The man was consenting when Des Grais interfered.

Compare this, if you like, with the scene in "The Three Guardsmen" where the four comrades and their servants are carrying Milady through the night to her execution.

Forbidden to speak and kept at a distance, henceforth, from all of the party except Des Grais, Marie tried to commit suicide; first by swallowing a pin and again by biting a mouthful of glass from the edge of a wine goblet and seeking to force the glass fragments down her throat.

Des Grais averted both these attempts to make him lose his bet, and he delivered his prisoner safe into the hands of the authorities at Paris, well within the time limit set for the wager.

Then began one of the most famous, most spectacular criminal trials the sensation-loving French have ever witnessed. It dragged on for weeks, and the trial room became the chief amusement center for king and court and populace at large. Here is a compassionately womanly comment on the case, from the "Letters of Madame de Sévigné" (Letter 269):

Madame de Brinvilliers acquaints us in her confession that her career of vice began at seven years of age; that she has since continuied this course and has poisoned her father and her two-brothers and one of her children and taken poison herself to test an antidote. Medea never equaled this.

There is now no other topic than the deeds of this Brinvilliers. As she has written in her confession that she has killed her father, it was doubtless written down from fear of forgetting to accuse herself of the crime. Her alarm lest these sins may escape her recollection is excellent.

Madame de Sévigné does not mention Marie's attempt to poison her own sister, though that, too, was included in the confession.

Marie, at the trial, repudiated this confession of hers, declaring that it was a forgery and that she was the victim of a vile conspiracy. And her air of gentle innocence, as well as her magnetic charm, won hundreds of onlookers to a belief in her.

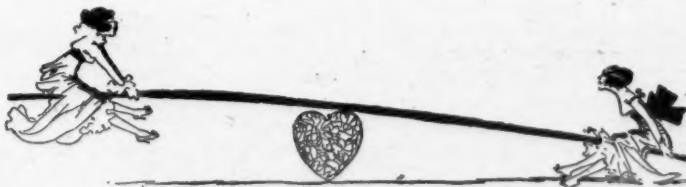
But there was enough evidence against her to have convicted the whole noble army of martyrs. After a drearily long legal battle, she was found guilty. Would you care to read the sentence, pronounced against her by the judge? It sounds queer enough, to twentieth-century ears. But it was neither more nor less than the customary punishment for poisoners of rank. Here is a translation of the sentence: It decrees:

The marchioness shall make a public avowal of and demand pardon for her crimes before the principal entrance of Notre Dame, to which she shall be taken in a common cart, barefooted, a rope around her neck, and holding a lighted torch of about two pounds weight; and then be conducted to the Place de Grève, where she shall be decapitated, her body burned, and her ashes scattered to the winds; being first submitted to the torture to obtain the names of her accomplices; declaring, moreover, all her property inherited from her family confiscated and levying also a fine of four thousand livres to the king, four hundred masses for the repose of the souls of her victims, ten thousand livres to the Dame Mangot, and the entire expenses of her own trial and that of La Chaussée.

I won't go into the details of her torture or of her execution.

As a matter of fact, I think we have had just about enough of her. Don't you?

The November number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's Super-women series: "Marguerite Steinheil, Archadventuress."





The Hollister Ghost

By Ethel Train

Author of "Son," "The Little Pink Girl," etc.

MRS. HOLLISTER'S maid had just removed her breakfast tray and drawn the door to noiselessly when there came a loud knocking.

"May we come in?" asked voices.

The shrill trebles smote Mrs. Hollister's ears unpleasantly; she preferred the subdued tones of servants during the early hours. A small fold showed between her arched eyebrows, and her "Oh, come in!" sounded slightly petulant. The girls, twelve and fourteen respectively, threw open the door, which had already begun swaying backward and forward under the hands of the trespassers.

"Hello, mother!" said Cynthia, the elder.

Ruth did not speak. A picture was painting itself on her brain, the harmonious whole made up of many charming details—subdued light of half-drawn curtains; delicate rose and gray of rug; ivory white of furniture and walls; and, center of this setting, a pretty woman in bed, lying on her side, with bright hair escaping in waves over the pillow and a bare, rounded arm, youthful and beautifully modeled, displayed upon the white, heavily embroidered sheet.

"It's cold," said Mrs. Hollister plaintively, pulling in her arms and drawing the pink blankets up to her delicate chin.

There was indeed a wintry freshness about the room, for the window had not long been shut, and the fire was

at the snapping, crackling stage. Ruth was reminded of autumn gardens, with crumbling flowers softened into faint and lovely hues, like old furniture mellowed by the hand of time; of distant lawns, still green, but without earthy odors, lying beneath sparkling and windless skies. Mrs. Hollister's left cheek rested on her hand; it was rosy with sleep and frosty air. The child's heart rushed to her; she experienced a sensation of exquisite pleasure.

"Can't you say good morning, Ruth?" said Mrs. Hollister sharply. "You always forget."

"Oh," replied Ruth, with blank eyes. They resembled those of a French doll, perfectly round and expressionless. Her mouth dropped. The effect was that of utter obstinacy. Mrs. Hollister had often seen that look before, and it never failed to irritate her. But as Ruth said "good morning" slowly, her mother refrained from comment.

"You'll be late," she admonished, more amiably. "Kiss me, both of you, and go."

Two rough-ulstered forms bent together over the dainty bed.

"Take care!" cried Mrs. Hollister, jarred. "I've told you never to hit the bed!"

"Good-by!" called out Cynthia.

"Good-by," said Ruth, an obedient echo.

She followed her sister out thoughtfully. It was Cynthia who had struck against the bed. Nevertheless, their mother had addressed them in dupli-

cate, as usual, with two little frowns of reproof exactly alike.

At school that morning Ruth's attention wandered. Her teachers did not succeed in arousing her interest; it was a difficulty they often experienced. There was a teachers' meeting that day. The school was large, but its principal prided herself upon the bestowal of individual attention. They sat about a round table in the little office, kindly creatures, very feminine in their innocent pride as modern educators, discussing solemnly the characteristics of the girls. Upon the Hollisters they bestowed a generous share of the limited time that was being ticked off by the clock on the mantel.

Cynthia was a favorite of nearly all. She was less pretty than Ruth, but more responsive; she had a word for every one. Her aggressiveness, trying during primary years, was now standing her in good stead. She went at Latin, mathematics, and modern languages with equal energy and attack, sweeping away all difficulties. Girls liked her, too. She had many of the qualities of a leader; her popularity was acknowledged; she had made her mark.

There was a perceptible fall in the temperature of the meeting when Ruth's turn came. Brows lifted a very little; mouths stiffened; one or two heads shook.

"I don't know just what the trouble is," said the principal. "She has everything in her favor. Her manners are sweet, but——"

She paused and looked about her.

"There's nothing the matter with her manners," said the teacher of mathematics. Her tone implied that there was very much the matter with everything else.

"She's a discouraging pupil, that's all," said the history teacher. "Never shows a gleam of interest in anything you tell her."

9

"She doesn't make friends, either," added the gymnasium teacher, who presided at recess. "She's agreeable, but she has no intimates."

The grammar teacher was new this year; she was young and made her suggestion timidly.

"Isn't she, perhaps, a little overshadowed?" she said. "Cynthia has so much life; she's not easy to keep up with."

"This is not a case of that sort," replied the principal with conviction, "for *both* these girls are attractive. Ruth is as tall as Cynthia, and better looking. The fault lies within herself. Perhaps she will outgrow it."

While they were under discussion, the girls were walking home together, their maid hurrying along behind. She was thinking that, from the back, they looked like twins, their hair hiding the difference in the width of their shoulders. Cynthia's were much broader. She liked to walk fast; it was hard for Ruth to keep up.

"Won't it be great to have new chintz in our room?" asked Cynthia. "That old green stuff is all holes. Did you see the samples?"

"Yes," replied Ruth eagerly. "I loved the one with the birds."

"I didn't," rejoined Cynthia with decision. "It's not half as pretty as the one with the pink flowers."

At the lunch table she said to her mother:

"We've chosen the chintz with the pink flowers."

Ruth stole a look at her sister's guileless face.

"She thinks she's telling the truth," she reflected. "*She doesn't even know* that she chose it. She's forgotten it."

Her heart was sore at the loss of the birds. She had been late for breakfast that morning, standing meditatively with the length of bright material in her hand. Once more it was June for her, and she was being awakened at

gray dawn by a twittering in the branches outside her window, subdued at first, then, as day brightened, growing in volume, separating into ecstatic trills and notes of surpassing sweetness that filled her with joy in these little prophets of the early morning and the flowering freshness of the earth.

"I'd have felt like that all winter," she reflected, with a little sigh of renunciation.

Her mother happened to look at her in trying to catch the eye of the butler, who had forgotten to put the salt on the table.

"Norton's very absent-minded," she thought, with displeasure, "and Ruth isn't a bit interested in the room. She's not interested in anything."

Mrs. Hollister was not enjoying herself. She was sorry to be lunching with the children alone. She was out of touch with them; their affairs bored her.

Meanwhile, a struggle was going on in Ruth's mind. She was provoked with herself for giving in thus tamely, fully conscious of her own lack of initiative and distressed by it. Here was her opportunity. It might be days before she lunched with her mother again. Half the time they did not meet from before school until toward evening. Nevertheless, the dessert was being served when she said quietly:

"Mother, couldn't I have a room of my own?"

Mrs. Hollister and Cynthia looked their astonishment.

"I don't see why!" burst out the latter, offended. "We've always had everything together!"

Immediate comment was a characteristic of Cynthia's; she never stopped to think. Her mother was capable of thought, but physical exercise alone appealed to her; the exercise of her mental powers she habitually avoided.

"You wouldn't be contented apart," she said didactically, with a reproach-

ful glance in the direction of her younger daughter.

Ruth quailed inwardly before it, just as the stalwart butler had done a few minutes earlier in the matter of the salt.

"I always longed for a sister to share with *me*," Mrs. Hollister concluded, and changed the subject.

Ruth did not join in the conversation that followed. She was not sulky, as her mother supposed; she was only trying to picture her mother sharing with any one. Mrs. Hollister's belongings were so distinctly hers! No masculine articles were ever about; if her father, coming in from his own quarters, happened to lay down a collar or a glove, it was instantly removed by a maid ever on the watch for such desecration. Ruth was ashamed of her doubts. She worshiped her mother in secret, and repented of having brought her down for even one instant from the pedestal upon which she kept her for adoration.

"She wasn't talking about *now*," she excused her to herself. "She said when she was a little girl."

Relieved, she ran off to get ready for her music class.

"I don't half know my lesson," she remembered, worried. "Cynthia always knows hers."

She marveled at the ease with which her sister's supple fingers rippled over the keys. Ruth could not have done half as well with twice as much practicing, and the time allotted to music in their crowded lives was but half an hour apiece.

"That's all we can spare," Cynthia had decreed. "With dancing school and sewing class and the dentist twice a week, we're as busy as we can be."

"The girls keep track of all their own engagements now," Ruth had heard her mother tell her father one day. "I don't have to bother about

anything. They decide just how much time to allow for each thing."

"That's right. Don't you bother," he had replied, in the approved manner of the admiring American husband.

The whole household treated Mrs. Hollister like that—as a superior being, preserved from small cares for higher things. She looked as young as the day she was married. Her husband's friends thought her a delightful mixture of femininity and sport. She was not averse to a slight flirtation now and then, harmless escapades upon which Frank looked with perturbed leniency. She had preserved the girlish lines of her figure by the judicious exercise of small privations. Soup she had not tasted for a year; her scales had warned her to let it alone. Solemnly she had set limits to her indulgence in sweets; the result had been most gratifying.

With a superior smile, she watched Cynthia's greedy consumption of everything that was good to eat; the time for interference had not come. In three or four years more, she would assume direction. Just now the girls' figures were hopelessly square; they had no lines at all. At least Cynthia hadn't. Nothing looked well on her. Of course, their dresses had the same cut.

How sweet they had been when they were little—two fluffy, dainty things! She had often sent for them to come to the drawing-room. When she had finished with them, they could always be sent back, trotting off willingly hand in hand. Imperceptibly, unaccountably, while she had stood still, they had grown up into their present unwieldy stage.

It was not so easy now to be rid of them. If she descended to the library, they were apt to be there. If she went to the drawing-room, behold, they were there also. Unless there were visitors, she hesitated to order them off; they

were too big for the nursery. So she solved the problem by going out more or remaining in her boudoir, safe from invasion. The club helped; she rather enjoyed lunching in the members' dining room with a friend or two, and smoking cigarettes afterward, daintily, with no affectation of manliness. Here people sometimes telephoned her, to make appointments for later in the afternoon; occasionally Frank, if he was going to get off early; more often others.

She was frequently to be seen toward six o'clock walking briskly around the reservoir in Central Park, in animated conversation with a male companion, her color like the winter sunset under her black lace veil, her slim figure outlined against a background of water that was rippled by the breeze into a semblance of real waves. As easily, as artificially, flowed the light current of their talk.

Mrs. Hollister was not a whit troubled by the fact that the man in most cases was intellectually her inferior. Her power of discrimination had for long years been subservient to her vanity. Sometimes, in quiet moments, she realized her mental deterioration. Whenever she read now, her thoughts wandered; a dozen years ago it had not been so. Generally, on these occasions, she laid the book down, tapped the floor impatiently with a prettily slippers foot, and went on to something else.

She knew, and Frank knew, that she was spoiled. By his indulgence, he had bought her companionship, which he cared for, her beauty, which went to his head, her readiness to enter into his pursuits. For she could be a good fellow when she chose, and tramp the woods with a gun over her shoulder, or sleep on balsam boughs under the stars. Frank considered himself lucky. He could afford the luxuries she required on returning to civilization. He had

got what he wanted, and was willing to pay the price.

His children he hardly saw. He had forgotten his disappointment at their not being boys, but there remained in his attitude toward them a germ of resentment at their audacity in having dared to participate in the sex of his idol. By and by they would be making demands on her; she would have to entertain their friends, go out with them. But not yet. Let them be cubs as long as they would, by gad, and put off the evil day!

Thus curiously, by virtue of the stupendous selfishness of their parents, were the girls made to lead sensible lives. Cynthia was a normal product of the advantages that money can procure in a big city. Her superabundant vitality delighted in days properly varied and filled to overflowing. Had she lacked occupation, she would have been constantly in mischief; as it was, her energies were turned to good account. She practiced, sewed, painted, and danced continually; she was never weary; there was nothing she did not enjoy except a quiet half hour. Upon Ruth, poring dejectedly over her notebook in their room after the music class that afternoon, she burst suddenly, and threw down an armful of books.

"I can't find my pencil!" she announced. "I've been downstairs looking for it everywhere."

Ruth scowled. She had been working very hard over the lesson that had been given out. She had just begun to grasp it, and she hated to be interrupted for the loss of a pencil.

"Keep still!" she said pettishly.

"My, how cross you are!" commented Cynthia. "Lend me that one, won't you? It's only ten minutes to supper, and you know you won't be able to do anything in ten minutes. I'll get my Latin out of the way."

Ruth gave up the pencil, over which Cynthia's fingers were hovering like

some bird of prey ready to swoop upon its victim. She felt as helpless as if it were being taken from her by force. Cynthia's grasp of the situation was cruelly accurate; twice ten minutes would hardly have sufficed to restore Ruth's broken train of thought. She was slow of concentration. Her sister could finish a thing almost before Ruth had begun it.

"I'll go down to the drawing-room and study my English history," muttered Ruth.

She was almost crying; unprepared lessons loomed up before her. History was not hard for her, but it pressed upon her now as an added weight.

"You can't," said Cynthia chattily, looking up as if the Latin book in her hand were a thing of no account. "I've been there. Mother's got visitors. There's tea. It didn't take 'em long to send *me* off!"

"I don't see how you can talk and study at the same time!" cried Ruth despairingly, as her sister twirled the hard-used volume about, punctuating her remarks with it.

"That's easy!" explained Cynthia. "Only *two* things at once! Can't you pat your head while you're rubbing your stomach? I can."

Jumping up, she suited action to words, a droll sight in her seriousness, had Ruth been in a mood for laughter. The Latin book had fallen to the floor; Cynthia picked it up and cast another cursory glance into its interior as the supper bell rang.

"That'll do!" she said, slamming it down upon the table and skipping off. "Come along."

Ruth followed with lagging steps. She was a well little girl; there was nothing the matter with her; yet she felt horribly tired to-night and unequal to her lot in life. The thickly carpeted stairs, as she descended, the shaded hall lights, more than all, the

voices she could hear in the drawing-room, added to her depression.

As she went by the open door, she caught the glint of silver. Two or three men were standing, in correct afternoon dress, in her mother's vicinity, toying with teacups. Mrs. Hollister's gown of violet chiffon over rose produced the effect of a chrysanthemum. A great collie with shining coat lay at her feet, his delicate muzzle pointing toward her hand, his sad, slanting eyes lifted to her face as to his Heaven.

Ruth, who loved daintiness, had not found a moment even to change her shoes. In heavy calfskin she plodded on, past the lamplight, the firelight, and the gay talk, down into those dim regions where the dinner table was unset and a little table was reserved for the children in the corner.

By and by two footmen came in to lay the cloth. They were in their shirt-sleeves, with their striped waistcoats on. They worked hurriedly, knowing that the redoubtable Norton was in a very bad humor that day.

"What good cakes!" exclaimed Cynthia, her mouth full. "Another relay, please!"

The little parlor maid ran off to carry out this request. The footmen paid no attention; they had not been engaged to wait on children. Presently the butler appeared with the discarded tea tray. It did not look attractive any more; the pretty cups were sloppy; what was left of the toast had dripped butter over the snowy linen. Norton's official mask was subject to variations; in the presence of Cynthia and Ruth, while maintaining silence, he yet let it be felt that he was not on dress parade. He kept his coat on in a manner which indicated that he was awaiting their exit to remove it; it was off the moment their backs were turned. None of these small things escaped Ruth; her sensibilities

had rough edges upon which they all caught.

"You look awfully pale!" said Cynthia. "I don't know what's the matter with you."

Upstairs she kept quiet for once; but it was too late. Ruth could not study; the letters danced before her; little balls of light and shadow came between her eyes and the page. Long after her sister was sound asleep, she lay staring into the dark, with the same colored designs, like ghastly fireworks, repeating themselves endlessly. Even when she shut her lids firmly, they were there; she could have drawn the pattern of them on paper. Eyes open or closed, it made no difference. Her night had been robbed of its rest.

It was two or three weeks after this that a disturbance began to make itself felt in the house. Mrs. Hollister perceived nothing for a while; if anything went wrong, she was always the last to hear of it. One day the second kitchen maid gave notice. She was a good worker, the cook said, but she could not be induced to stay for higher wages. Mrs. Hollister thought little of this until the butler came to her and asked if he might have the livery altered for a new footman.

"Who is leaving?" asked Mrs. Hollister, annoyed. It was a rare occurrence at this time of year; the servants were well paid, and generally stayed the winter.

"William, madam."

Mrs. Hollister was displeased. William was the quietest of the footmen, respectful and attentive; he was really an unusual type.

"Send him to me," she ordered.

When he came, she could make nothing of him. It was not at all on Norton's account that he wished to go; he got on very well with Norton; he had "private reasons."

"Oh, very well," said Mrs. Hollister,

sorry that she had bothered with the man. But she told Norton to offer him ten dollars more a month.

On the Monday following, a gawky new footman appeared at dinner, wearing the refitted livery. Mrs. Hollister was completely surprised. She had assumed that what William wanted was an advance in wages, and she had been more than generous in his case. When, on the following morning, the head laundress sent word that she would like an interview, Mrs. Hollister began to put two and two together.

"Perhaps I can find out something from her," she thought. "She's Irish."

So she set herself to draw the woman out, chagrined at having to coax and cajole, but consumed by curiosity.

"I'm sure you wouldn't upset things, Nora," she said in her very sweetest manner, "without an excellent reason. Now, do tell me what it is!"

Nora stood, hands on hips, in open admiration. She had hardly caught a glimpse of her mistress before in three years of service. She had fancied her purse-proud and stand-offish. How mistaken she had been!

"I'd be glad to oblige ye, 'm," she replied heartily. "But I can't stay in a house where there's such goin's-on."

"Goings-on?" repeated Mrs. Hollister, at a loss. "What goings-on?"

Nora shook her head, smiling; she pursed her lips, as one does at a little child.

"I'll say no more," she whispered. "It's not me that'll be after makin' any throuble. Three places I've had in ten years, an' never made throuble at any wan of them."

And to this she stuck valiantly, proud of her record, which no complaining on her part had ever besmirched. Mrs. Hollister watched her curtsy herself out without broaching the subject of more pay; she was losing faith in the efficacy of her remedy. Three more days passed. The underservants were

giving notice now at the rate of one a day. Every time there was a tap at her door, Mrs. Hollister jumped up, full of nervous apprehension.

"There won't be any one left soon," she thought. "I can't imagine what's got into them."

She felt quite grateful to Norton for remaining calmly at his post; he had his faults, but desertion, it seemed, was not one of them. Her maid, too, continued unmoved. Mrs. Hollister longed to engage her in conversation and obtain information, but it was not possible to make a beginning. Their relation had not formed itself in that way.

"You've got to get to the bottom of this," she said to her husband finally, when he came in one evening. "I hear Norton in your room now, fussing around. Go and find out all about it. You'd think they were afraid of something!"

Frank went off as ordered, and came back presently, his round face full of amusement.

"It's g-h-o-s-t-s!" he drawled.

Mrs. Hollister did not smile.

"Now, Frank," she said, "don't try to be funny! It's not at all in your line."

"I wasn't trying to be funny!" he protested. "I was never more serious in my life. Just wait till I tell you! It is funny, though, all the same."

"Go on," said his wife briefly.

"One night last week," he continued, "when Helga Sjöholmi—that's the pantry maid, you know—was going up the back stairs to bed—she would have taken the elevator, of course, only it was in use at the moment—she noticed a door open on one of the landings. Happening to stop, she heard a noise—not a loud noise, but quietlike; a kind of rustling, as of something flapping—" He stopped, convulsed by his wife's look of utter incredulity. "Wait!" he admonished her. "That's only the beginning. Helga told the

story next day in the servants' hall, and several began to laugh at her, William the loudest. She and William had it back and forth quite lively—”

“Please stop talking like that, Frank!” he was interrupted.

“All right,” submissively. “When William persisted in saying that he didn't believe in ghosts, she undertook to convince him. So she led him in the small hours to the drawing-room, where the obliging specter began at once to go through its part again in the dark, with the addition of moans, I believe, this time.”

“Why didn't they turn on the lights?” snapped Mrs. Hollister.

“Don't ask *me*,” replied Frank. “I wasn't there.”

“It's the most absurd performance I ever heard of!” she asserted. “What a pack of fools!”

“They haven't had the nerve to look for further manifestations,” her husband went on, “but half of them are convinced that the house is haunted. A thirty-five-foot stone house, on Fifth Avenue, New York City, with a Wendell's Electric Protection man patrolling the block every ten minutes! There you are!”

“We'll do a little investigating on our own account to-night,” said Mrs. Hollister grimly, “when we get back from the dance at the Safford-Pynes.”

“Oh, are you going to that?” he asked. “Well, I don't mind—I'm not sleepy. I'm on.”

Seven hours later, husband and wife were crawling homeward in Mrs. Hollister's little town Renault, in imminent danger of skidding, for a light snowfall was making the asphalt slippery as glass.

“It would never occur to Raoul to bring the chains,” she said, with a glance of annoyance at the trim back of her chauffeur.

Frank made no rejoinder. He had

his own man, an efficient Yankee named Smith. Helen was such a stickler for style; she was always in trouble of one sort or another.

“Perhaps there *are* burglars,” she said suddenly, “though it doesn't seem possible. Nothing has been missed.”

“Never thought of that,” he answered gravely. “You'd better let me look into it alone.”

“Nonsense!” returned his wife, and he thought how game she was.

Upstairs, he took off her wrap and laid it carefully on her bed; he was always glad when she had told Fulton not to wait up, and the performance of these small services fell upon him. Then, with only the night switch turned on in the halls, they crept slowly down the stairs. How had the spirit of levity fallen from them there in the night! Mrs. Hollister could feel her husband's breath warm on her bare shoulder. She was excited. He was no longer the commonplace Frank of every day, but the man who for years had laid at her unworthy feet daily—for her to trifle with, scorn, reject—the unappreciated offering of his love. Something caught in her throat; her fingers touched his sleeve; hand in hand they embarked upon their adventure.

Mrs. Hollister had never before prowled like this about a silent and sleeping house. She had always been where light was and comfort—motion, gayety. Portraits hung in the hall between drawing-room and library—her grandfather, stout and benevolent, with two chins and a shock of brownish-gray curls; her grandmother, wistful and sweet, with a cap over her smooth hair and a rose at her breast. How reproachful, how still, yet how alive, they hung there on the white wall, shadowy progenitors of her sentient self! There they sat in judgment, and at this hour would not be forgotten. Two black holes showed where the familiar rooms should have been. Mrs.

Hollister shivered slightly and her grip tightened on Frank's hand.

"Let's come close," she whispered, approaching the drawing-room. "Now, listen."

Was it the overwrought state of her nerves that made her fancy that she heard the echo of a sound?

"There is some one," breathed Frank, and her heart turned to stone. "Helen," he entreated, in a whisper, "please go upstairs!"

She did not move; he knew that it was useless to argue. She was in danger there in the dark. They might already have been overheard. Leaving her side, he groped against the wall for the button, miscalculated his distance, and could not find it. His hand struck the shade of an electric lamp just inside the door; one of the little brass chains tinkled against the bulb as he fumbled with it. He pulled it, and the room was softly illuminated, shadowy in the corners.

What was that? That gleam, over there, of something delicately, pitifully white? Trembling, he stood rooted to the ground. He heard the swish of Helen's dress as she drew near him, felt the pressure of her body against his side.

"It's Ruth," his white lips framed. "Little Ruth, and she's walking in her sleep!"

Mrs. Hollister put out a hand to steady herself. The room was reeling; she was afraid that she would fall.

"I think I can pick her up without waking her," he whispered. "I'll try."

Ruth was standing erect, with hands clasped; her nightgown fell about her in white folds; the stern purity of her face might have been cut in marble; like a marble statue of old, her eyes were veiled. They were coming toward her, the two together, when she began to move.

"Stop!" said Mrs. Hollister appre-

hensively. "Let's see what she's going to do."

The young curve of Ruth's breast showed through the thin muslin that clung to it; tall, queenly, virginal, there was nothing about her to suggest the child. Like a bride approaching the altar, she walked with dignified steps. Presently her lips began to move; coherent sentences came.

"Those are *my* china animals," she said. "You're not to touch them. Cynthia, why don't you let my things alone? How do you know you like them better than I do? You're not me. You never let *me* touch *your* things!"

The incongruous words smote Frank's ear with something of a shock.

"She's dreaming," he whispered, "about toys. Who'd think it, to look at her?"

Mrs. Hollister was unable to answer. Her thoughts were in a turmoil, but her quick intelligence had already grasped the trend of Ruth's apparently irrelevant fancies.

"This is *my* room," Ruth continued slowly. "I've been here lots and lots of times. Our room isn't ours, Cynthia! It's yours! I shall ask mother for the bird chintz to make curtains of. Oh, how pretty it will be! Nobody can come in here unless I want them. No, Cynthia, not you! Stay out! I've got my lessons to study."

Words ignored and forgotten were coming back to sear themselves on Mrs. Hollister's brain.

"Can't I have a room of my own?" That was what Ruth had said.

"I want to ask some of the girls to come here," went on the low, measured voice. "Mother, I think they'd like me if they were with me alone! I never see them without Cynthia; Cynthia always says everything first. I've never had a chance to speak! Please let me have them here, and don't let Cynthia come!"

"I thought Cynthia was nice to her," muttered Frank.

"Oh, hush!" implored his wife. "Cynthia's not responsible. She did what I let her do—helped her to do. Between us, we've taken the heart out of her! Poor, bewildered little girl! Poor baby!"

She held out her arms in supplication, fingers stretched, rosily cushioned palms upward. But Ruth moved relentlessly in another direction, pursuing the mother of her dreams.

"Can't I stay here, mother dear?" she begged. "It's so lovely in your room! I've never seen anything so lovely. *I'm* going to have pink blankets, too, when I grow up! It's so cold on the street, and the dust's blowing in clouds. It's no use for me to go to school! Everybody expects me to get the same marks as Cynthia, because I'm just as big. I haven't time to learn anything; I'm always thinking about that."

The dreams had become terribly disturbing. Ruth had forgotten her solution of her difficulties; her voice was breaking into a wail.

"You always send me away from you, mother!" she lamented. "It was Cynthia who was making a noise; I wasn't! I love to be quiet! You think I don't because Cynthi doesn't. You don't know! Oh, mother, you're not listening! Pay attention! Pay some attention to me!"

So agitated was the cry that it awoke the sleeper, and she stood, wide-eyed, in the center of the great, formal room.

"Where am I?" she faltered, and was folded in her father's arms.

"Right here where you belong," he answered, crushing her against his breast. "In two minutes, you'll be in bed."

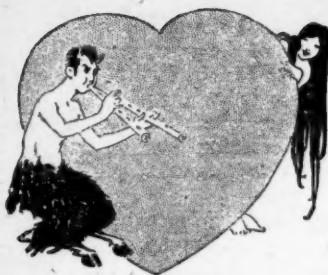
Mrs. Hollister whispered to her husband as they went upstairs. Ruth did not heed her; she was dazed with sleep. Not until she lay warm under the blankets did she wake fully.

"Why, father!" she smiled. "This isn't right! You've made a mistake. You've put me in the blue guest room."

No one replied for a moment. Mrs. Hollister was standing with averted head. Memory is a sharp accuser, once it is allowed full sway, and she had much to answer for. Subconsciously, at dead of night, the stifled individuality of her own child had been forced to rise up and claim the rights she had criminally denied it. When would this ghost be laid? There was nothing youthful in her appearance as she turned toward the bed; she looked quite haggard. But her voice held a new quality as she said, bending over:

"I'm tired of this blue brocade, Ruthie, and I don't want this room at all. You're going to keep it. Don't you think a chintz would be much more cheerful? Perhaps we might find one with birds."





Shamus Dan

By Maurice Joy

Wherever the game of love is played,
In passion or joy or crime,
It's a mountainy man for a mountainy maid
Until the end of time.

GRAY and lowering were the skies, but black and lowering was the face of Shamus Dan Kissane, as he stumbled drunk, though not with whisky, out of Murphy's public house at the corner of Parnell and Freedom Streets, in the battered West-of-Ireland village near which he had been born. He stood for a minute on the wet pavement, the whole six feet two of him shaking, his arms raised above his head, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing. Then he started, with a look neither to the right nor to the left, crunching the muddy road under his heels, down toward the market place and across it, while in the doors unkempt and unshaven loafers watched him and whispered to one another.

For they had waited for this; they had known he was coming; they had wagered on what his wild blood would drive him to when he found that the woman for whom he had slaved and tortured himself couldn't wait.

He neither saw them nor heard them. His head was thumping with grief and anger; he ground his teeth as only the passionate man of the mountains can; and he held on, on, on, not knowing or caring where he went.

"God spare you, Shamus Dan."

A beggarwoman, with the effrontery of her class, spoke where none else would dare. And he flung her a coin, but kept on, on, on.

"An' isn't it fine he looks," she said to herself, "with his American clothes an' the gold chain across his belly? I'm thinkin' Mary Casey is a sad woman to-day, she not to have waited for him, but to marry little Maingey Murphy an' his three yards of public-house counter."

"God spare you, Shamus Dan," said another beggarwoman, and a coin fell at her feet without a look of recognition. So that the beggarwoman said, "It's a millionaire entirely he must be, an' I remember the time he hadn't a penny in his pocket, but for the salmon he used to poach in the new river an' they put him in jail for."

"God spare you, Shamus Dan," cried a third beggar. But this time a look of recognition came into the impassioned eyes, and Shamus Dan stopped.

"It's you, Patch!"

"Aye, it's me, Shamus Dan, sure enough."

"What happened to you?"

"The ways of the world, Shamus Dan. But what happened to you is aisily seen, for it's a great gintleman you have become."

"What broke your spirit, Patch, and made a beggar out of you?"

"There's only wan of two things to

break a man's spirit, drink or a woman, an' I'd sooner be out on the mountains after a hare than huntin' the Queen of Spain. There was always that differ between you an' me."

Shamus Dan's face, which had softened at sight of his old comrade's misfortune, hardened again.

"It's likely you know my story, Patch."

"The world knows it. It's often I've sat here since she married, hearin' of the money you wor makin', an' sayin' to meself: 'He'll come back, he'll come back, sure enough, an' he'll not know the thing that's happened, for no wan will have the courage to tell him. An' there isn't a hair of his head that isn't worth a hundred sluts like her.'"

"Stop! Shut your mouth, Patch, or I'll brain you for that hag's tongue of yours!"

Patch Daly wilted, as he had done many a time before when Shamus Dan had caught him trying to sneak more than his share of the poachers' money. But it was with a dog's look of terror that he cowered, waiting for the first sign of his master's relenting, to lick his hand.

Presently the storm passed.

"How long is she married?"

"Two years come next Shrove."

"Aye, that's when she wrote and asked me to bring her to New York, and I told her the home wasn't ready yet. She never answered me again, but I thought I was sure of her, and I went on working, working, and waiting for her."

"She was afraid to tell you. She was always afraid of you. Maybe she thought 'twas the way you had forgotten her."

"Has she a child?"

"No, nor the sign o' wan, aither, nor ever will have, if what they say is true, for they say she's no rale wife to Maingey Murphy."

"In the name of God, then, why did she marry him?"

"A woman's ways is quare ways. You wor always a proud, passionate man, Shamus Dan, an' she was afraid of you. Maybe 'twas somethin' they told her, an' maybe she took some notion, for the women used to look at her an' say, 'There she is, Shamus Dan's cast-off, an' Maingeay Murphy hasn't eyes for any other girl but her, an' him the catch of the seven parishes.' An' her father would be talkin' to her, an' the priest would be talkin' to her. Och, it's many a time I seen her goin' up the cinter of the chapel, an' the eyes of her blazin' an' her mouth tightened, for well she knew what they wor all mutterin' in their hearts, whatever they wor mutterin' in their prayers. An' then she married Maingeay Murphy, an', as God is me judge, I do be often thinkin' she married him to spite them."

Shamus Dan's arm shot out, and his strong, trembling fingers caught the beggar by the shoulder and shook him.

"Is it the truth you're telling me?"

"As God is me judge, it's the truth as I heard it! An' they say that when her father was dyin', six months ago, an' he got the priest to speake to her an' ask her to be a good wife to Maingeay Murphy—for it was his dyin' wish—all she would say to the priest was, 'You've married me, father, but you'll never church me.'"

"Come along with me, Patch. Come along out of this, for I can't stand in one spot and talk of her."

They took the mountain road, the one with his fine American clothes and the gold chain across his belly, and the other ragged, drink-sodden, and cringing. And as they moved off, the two beggarwomen shuffled out from behind the wall where they had gone to watch them.

"It's great luck Patch Daly has for Shamus Dan to remember him," said the first.

"It is indeed," said the second. "For with that fine, gossipin' tongue of his, he'll get more out of Shamus Dan in wan hour than we'll get in the whole October devotions."

"Do you think he'll kill her?" asked the first.

"He's a mountainy man," said the second, preparing to hobble off to her own stand. "An' the wind never blows the same way two hours on the mountains."

"Aye, an' she's a mountainy woman, an' Maingey Murphy's public house never took the taste of the wild berries out of her mouth nor the smell of the woodbine from her proud nostrils. Be goin' to your own place, for I see her comin' now, an' maybe she'd give me a pinny to pray for her poor father's soul."

"Much good a tinker's prayer would do him, an' he roastin' in purgatory, God help us!"

"Sure 'tis a pity you do not curse him, you sheep stealer, an' then the way to heaven an' a sate among the saints of God would be made aisier for him."

II.

Mary Casey—she was rarely called by her married name—came along with her head in the air and her proud nostrils quivering as if they were searching for that smell of woodbine the beggar spoke of. She was a quick, flaming woman, with a mass of hair and eyes that burned like coals of fire.

"God spare you, ma'am," said the first beggar. But Mary Casey passed her by unnoticed.

"She's learnin' Maingey Murphy's ways," said the beggar to herself.

"God spare you, ma'am," said the second beggar. But she, too, was passed by, and the two beggars came together.

"Isn't it a wonder she wouldn't be

liberal to-day," said one, "an' her true love after comin' back to her?"

"It's a wonder that's no wonder," said the other, "an' she tethered to Maingey Murphy for life."

"A tinker's woman would lave him."

"Aye, that she would—if she could get wan that would have her."

And the two fell to their ancient vituperation, while the flaming woman passed on. She had dressed herself almost without knowing it. She had put on her hat and walked down the village street while the gossips and the loafers shrank back in their dens until they could talk behind her back. And as she walked along, she was saying to herself:

"He came back, he came back, an' he looked at me like that, with never a word! 'Tis contempt an' loathing he has for me to-day."

She kept on down the road he had traveled; she knew he must take the mountain road. And when she came to where he and Patch Daly had talked, she suddenly saw the church before her. It seemed to say to her, "Come in here. Come in and rest." And she knew then why she had fled out of Maingey Murphy's house; she must have killed him if she had seen him after the look Shamus Dan had given her.

She went into the church and walked straight to the Madonna's altar. She was going to pray, but to pray for what? She could think only of the look in Shamus Dan's eyes, and the Madonna's statue was cold and lifeless; the church had no warmth in it. But a voice kept saying to her, "He's waiting outside. Go out, go out to him."

And after a few minutes she got up without blessing herself and walked in the same proud way out again, looking neither to the right nor to the left, as if the empty seats were filled with the people she hated, the mean-spirited, cooped-up little people of the village.

She took the mountain road, and she had not walked a hundred yards when she saw Shamus Dan and Patch Daly ahead of her, standing on the road, outlined against the gray sky and the mountains. As she came near them, Patch Daly slunk into the ditch, but Shamus Dan stood still and watched her come, his eyes blazing as fiercely as hers. As she came nearer, she flung her hat into the ditch and shook out her hair with a toss of her head.

"I'm still a mountainy lass, Shamus Dan," she said, with a proud note in her voice. "Will you take me or leave me?"

For a second his bitterness got the upper hand.

"You're Maingey Murphy's woman, now, Mary Casey. You're in his pound."

"Neither church nor law could keep me from the man I love, Shamus Dan, if he wanted me."

"Do you mean it?" he asked, taking a step toward her, his eyes softening.

"I'm here to prove it. Are you the man to take me?"

"That I am," said Shamus Dan. "To the ends of the world."

And there on the road he folded his arms around her and kissed her, till, between laughter and crying, they forgot Patch Daly.

It was she who remembered him.

"You can go back to Maingey Murphy, Patch," she said, "an' tell him I've gone to me father's house in the mountains with me man. An' if you come there in one day, or maybe two, we'll give you a fine supper, for it's me honeymoon I'm goin' to celebrate now."

Patch Daly went as he was bidden, without a word, and the lovers turned toward the mountains.

"It's in the mountains I want to live," she said as they walked along. "I've never given up me father's house, but I put a caretaker there, an' often when I couldn't bear the face or the sight of

Maingey Murphy any longer, I used to go there, an' take the shoes an' stockings from me feet, an' loosen out me hair, an' sit in the rain watchin' the mists roll from hill to hill. An' when the hour of the settin' sun would come, on a day when maybe there would be no rain an' only white clouds in the sky, I'd be lookin' out over the Atlantic, an' I'd be seein' a great city in the clouds an' you walkin' the streets of it, strange women by your side an' no thought of me in your heart. An' then I'd throw myself on the heather an' cry an' cry till the darkness came an' the lonesomeness came over me so that I'd go back again to Maingey Murphy's house."

"It's many a lonesome hour I had, too," he said, "among the great crowds, since the day I went to seek my fortune. But sure it's all over now, an' we have a home out there to go to."

"We have a home in the mountains," she said then. "Sure it's not afraid to stay there you are, an' it's heavy me heart would be to leave them."

He did not argue with her further, and they walked on toward the mountains, happy, although they both knew the wrath that would be kindled through the whole countryside, and the vengeance that the clansmen of Maingey Murphy would seek for their defiance.

III.

They came to the crossroads of Ardmoniel. Before them rose the mountains, the land of wild heather, far-roaming animals, and all insurrectionary things. Behind them was the plain, with its pastures, its sleekness, and its mean, tongue-ridden villages. The crossroads was God's frontier. Above it were freedom, the freshness of slashing winds, the great and holy loneliness, the cleanness of life. Below them, the petty squabbling and mean ambitions of the plain. This was a terrible adventure they were about to take.

—to flaunt the church and their people, to risk their immortal souls. But they thought of that only to fling it aside; they were young and passionate, and the blood of outlaws ran in their veins.

When they came to the cottage, she sent off the caretaker as she had sent off Patch Daly, and beckoned Shamus Dan to a seat by the fire.

"Sit down, Shamus Dan," she said, "for it's the thrill of your voice I'd be listenin' to, an' you tellin' me of what happened beyond the great sea."

"I'll tell you that, sure enough, but you must first tell me what made you marry Maingey Murphy, for sure if there wasn't another but him in the wide world, I'd think you wouldn't have him."

"Och," she said with a laugh, "'twas the devil in me, I suppose, for the women's tongues were always gratin' on me an' I knowin' how anxious they were to get Maingey Murphy for a son-in-law. So I ups an' marries him, me hearty." Then, raking the fire, she went on: "Well, I'm laughin', but the truth is I married him when you wouldn't come for me."

"Didn't I tell you I was only waiting to have the home ready?"

"I know, but I was that lonesome I'd have walked the roads of the world with you. An' when you wrote, so patientlike, I thought maybe 'twas some one else you'd found, an' my pride was hurt. I knew they were callin' me 'Shamus Dan's cast-off'—an' 'twas to spite them I married Maingey Murphy. But I'm the same to-day as I was born, for I swore that no one but you would ever be my true husband."

The people of the mountains are dreamers, and when their dreams come true, they take it as the most natural thing in the world. Mary Casey and Shamus Dan sat for an hour or two beside the fire and talked of old times and the times to come, as if there had been no bitter years for them. Then

she prepared a supper of tea and hot cake, and they were partaking of this in the warm glow of the peat fire when the door was pushed open, and Patch Daly tumbled in, breathless.

"Ye must go," he said, "go at once, for the priest himself is comin' after ye, an' 'tis only the father's word that kept the Murphys from huntin' ye already."

But if Patch Daly thought to frighten them, he found out his mistake.

"Let him come," said Shamus Dan, gritting his teeth, "and let him bring the whole Clan Murphy with him. I warrant they'll get a reception they don't expect! They can come in peace and go in peace if they wish, but if it's fight they want, they'll get it, for I think this house was never without its fowling piece."

As he said this, he looked at Mary Casey, and she, without a word, climbed the stairs that led from the kitchen to the loft and found the double-barreled shotgun hidden under the thatch of the roof and returned with it.

At the sight of it, the poacher's blood in Patch Daly also began to tell.

"I'll stay with you, Shamus Dan," said he. "It's many a tough fight we've been through before."

So they set to work to barricade themselves, Mary Casey helping without showing a trace of fear. But in her heart she knew that whatever might happen this night, it would be but the beginning of a war, and she was thinking that, after all, she must leave her mountains and go across the seas with Shamus Dan.

They took the cow-house door from its hinges and a few poles from a gap and with these buttressed the front door of the cottage. Against the back door they placed sacks filled with sand from a pit in the hillside. They found over a hundred cartridges hidden in the thatch and put them on the table beside the gun. That seemed to be all they

could do until, mindful of tactics often used in the land war, Mary Casey put a large pot of water on the fire to boil.

When this had been done, they sat silent and grim by the fireside until Shamus Dan said:

"The priest is a long time coming."

"I doubt he's still reasonin' with the Murphys," answered Patch Daly.

Mary Casey said nothing. She was no less determined than ever, but these grim preparations had brought home to her the seriousness of their case. She could feel herself praying that it might come out all right—but if anything should happen to Shamus Dan? She would die—that was all there was to it. She would not return to that mockery of life with Maingey Murphy.

Through over an hour of this torturing wait they sat, the two men smoking and Mary Casey never stirring save when she swung the pot of boiling water clear of the fire and when she replenished the paraffin lamp that hung from the rafter, giving a sickly light. Then they heard the sound of horses' hoofs coming at a trot, and Shamus Dan stood up.

"There's more than one," he said.

He went to the window and pulled aside a sandbag that he had placed there, but when he looked out, he could see nothing for a few minutes, for while there was clear moonlight, the road to the cottage was tortuous. Presently round the bend came the priest, on horseback and alone.

"It's only Father Fallon," said Shamus Dan. "But I'll swear there were two horses."

Mary Casey had not stirred. At that speech a flash of resentment burst from her.

"I'll warrant you it's Maingey that's with him," she said, "an' he's afraid to come beyond the bend."

It was, indeed, Maingey Murphy, but it was not fear that had made him stop at the bend, for the moment the priest

left him, he stood up in his stirrups and waved his hat three times. At this signal, seven men tethered their horses half a mile below him and began to climb the hill, without a word, but with sullen and bitter looks. They did not come directly toward the cottage, but climbed a watercourse a hundred yards to the right of it, and finally stopped at a spot from which they had a clear view of the cottage door.

The priest knew nothing of their coming. When they had gathered at Maingey Murphy's home in response to the call of one of them who had ridden from house to house on hearing Patch Daly's story, Father Fallon had exacted a promise that there would be no bloodshed and that they would leave the matter in his hands. But they had no intention of doing this, and Maingey Murphy had accompanied the priest only to deceive him. Perhaps, if Shamus Dan gave up the woman at once, they would let him be. But if Father Fallon left the cottage without her, well, they crossed themselves and swore that one to whom the law and the church had given their name should never spend a night under the same roof as Shamus Dan, no, nor an hour in peace.

The priest had scarcely tethered his horse when they were at their point of vantage, and watched what followed as I tell it.

Father Fallon walked quietly to the door of the cottage and knocked. Shamus Dan had not replaced the sandbag in the window, and the priest could see the light burning within. He noticed at once that the house was barricaded, and that gave him the clew for his first speech.

"It's me—Father Fallon," he said, "and I'm alone. Won't you let me in, Mrs. Murphy? I've come only to talk with you."

There was a hurried whispering in-

side. Mary Casey had risen from her seat by the fire and was saying:

"You needn't fear to let him in, Shamus Dan, for it's on the one word with you I'll be, an' he'll go back the way he came."

But Shamus Dan was more prudent. For one thing, there was his certainty that another horseman had ridden up to the bend with the priest, and for another, he knew the Murphy clan well and suspected them of just such a ruse as they were in fact using.

"Better not open the door," he said, "for if we do, we don't know the minute the Murphys will rush in on top of us."

"You're talking sinse, Shamus," said Patch Daly. "Let you talk to the priest through the window, ma'am, for he's a dacint man, an' I'd think it hard for him to be left without the hospitality of a word from you, even if it's only to tell him to go home."

Father Fallon knocked again at the door, and Mary Casey went to the window and opened it.

"You can't come in, Father Fallon," she said, "for well I know Maingey Murphy came to the bend of the road with you, an' we don't know where he an' his clan are this blessed minute."

"Your husband is waiting for you at the bend, Mrs. Murphy. Be said by me now and come back with him, before you bring a curse and a disgrace on the parish. For the like of this thing never happened here before."

She hesitated a moment before replying. She wanted to pour forth in the bitterest words her hatred of the parish that had driven her into marrying Maingey Murphy, and of the clan that was now trying to prevent her from living her life as she wished. But there was something in the mystery of the night that restrained her, the soft peace of a moonlit night on those lonely mountains after rain, and there was that quality in her soul which could appre-

ciate the sadness of the white-haired servant of God facing her on his fruitless mission. Mary Casey bit her tongue and kept back her words of scorn, saying quietly, instead:

"Let you be goin' home, Father Fallon, for it's not with you we have any quarrel."

And as she said this, she closed the window and herself took the sandbag and placed it against it.

Father Fallen saw the hopelessness of remaining, and went to where his horse was tethered. But, discomfited, instead of mounting at once and riding away, he led the horse slowly down the road to the bend where he had left Maingey Murphy. He dreaded what would happen when the result of his visit was known, as much as he was horrified at the sin he was powerless to prevent.

In a fit of deep brooding, he reached the bend, but he was no sooner there than he awoke with a start. Maingey Murphy was nowhere to be seen.

The priest took swift counsel with himself. He guessed that, for all his years of shopkeeping, the old mountain blood had asserted itself in Maingey Murphy, or else the fear of his relatives' scorn had intimidated him. Father Fallon, looking to the right and the left over the bleak, wind-swept hillside, could see no trace of Maingey and his friends, but he felt sure that they were somewhere near and that they had deceived him. He clambered on to a rock and, taking off his hat, flung out his arms.

"Wherever ye are, men," he cried at the top of his voice, "let ye be said by me and come home. Don't add murder to the crime of this night."

But not a stir came from the wilderness about him, although from the watercourse where they were hidden, Maingey Murphy and his seven clansmen could see that pathetic figure outlined against the pearl-pale sky and hear

his voice. Again and again the priest called, while tears rolled down his face, until at last, despairing, he clambered down from the rock and, mounting his horse, set off toward the village as fast as his horse could go. The men in the watercourse knew that he had resolved to call out the constabulary.

IV.

Before the sound of the priest's horse's hoofs had died away, the eight men emerged from the watercourse. They were all dark, wiry men except Maingey Murphy, who looked pale and delicate beside them. They despised him, but he bore their name, and it was their name's honor they were going to avenge. All but him had lived and roamed on the mountains from childhood. He had always been a weakling, and nature, as a recompense, they said bitterly, had given him a shopkeeper's brains. There was not one of the other seven who, in the old potheen-making times, had not spent days and nights among the hills with the sky for a roof, hunted by the revenue officers. They were naturally lawless, but they had codes of their own, and as they stood on the bank, one of them said:

"Twas on a night like this we shot old Herbert at the crossroads," recalling the summary justice they had executed on a cruel landlord in the days of the land war.

"Listen to me, now," he, the oldest of the gang, went on. "'Twill be nearly an hour before the priest can bring the police here, an' the job must be finished by then. Maingey, there, will go up to the cottage door, while we hide behind the fence, an' demand his wife. He'll tell Shamus Dan an' her what's comin' to them if he don't give her up."

They all nodded except Maingey, who was shivering with fear, and, for shame's sake, blaming the soggy, peaty

ground sodden with the recent heavy rains.

"I'd rather there was no bloodshed," he said. "Ye all know Shamus Dan, an' I hear he has that blackguard, Patch Daly, with him. Can't ye leave it with the police?"

They only scowled at him for an answer.

"Come on," said their leader.

When they came to the fence that inclosed the yard around the cottage, Maingey Murphy went reluctantly forward and the others lay down to wait. There was no evidence of life within, except the smoke issuing from the chimney; the shuttering of the windows and the sandbags hid the light of the paraffin lamp. Inside, Shamus Dan and Patch Daly were sitting by the fire, and Mary Casey had begun to make tea.

"For," said she, with her face set, "'twill help us to keep awake until the dawn comes."

When Maingey Murphy knocked at the door, all three started. They knew it was not the priest, for they had heard no horse's hoofs, and they didn't answer the first knock.

"It's the Murphys now," said Shamus Dan after a minute. "They didn't wait for the priest to tell 'em."

He turned toward the door.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"It's me," Maingey Murphy answered in a weak voice; and then, mindful of his seven clansmen behind the fence, he added with some vehemence, "And if you don't give up my wife, Shamus Dan, you'll have to answer to me an' my seven cousins that's waitin' here to carry her home."

Before Shamus Dan could answer, Mary Casey stepped forward. When Maingey Murphy knocked, she had gone pale, but the sound of his voice whipped her into passion.

"You an' your seven cousins will never carry me to your home, Maingey

Murphy, or to a place that is yours, unless maybe to the graveyard at Droumawalla when me an' me brave lover aren't alive to stop 'em. For it's the way I'd rather be dead than livin' under your roof."

"It's in hell you'll suffer for that speech, Mary Casey," retorted the trembling man outside. "An' as for you, Shamus Dan, the Murphys know how to leave their mark on a man that's without morality or decency."

They could hear him step across the yard to the fence and the oaths that burst from the seven angry men, not thirty feet away. But they could see nothing. So well barricaded were they that not even a ray of moonlight could filter in.

"They'll shoot now," said Shamus Dan, "and when they find that's no use, they'll throw stones against the door, unless they bring a battering-ram or a bigger clan against us."

There was but one room in the cottage besides the kitchen and loft; thus the defenders had to watch only the two windows and the front and back doors. Against seven men Shamus Dan felt they could do it, for he, too, guessed that Father Fallon would bring the police before long. But he wished all the same that there was another gun for Patch Daly. Patch's only weapon was a huge stick, and he took his stand beside the window in the living room, ready to brain the first man who tried to climb through it.

The first two volleys from the attackers shattered the glass in the windows, and after two more the shutters were in splinters. But no sound came from within. Then the leader of the Murphys, thinking he had terrified the defenders, called out:

"Will you surrender now, Shamus Dan? For we mane business this night."

For answer, Shamus Dan grimly poked the muzzle of his gun between

the sandbags and through a hole in the shutters and fired. It was a chance shot, but it riddled the bushes above the Murphys' heads.

"Manamondiul!" said the leader. "No man can cross that yard an' live while there's a gun in Shamus Dan's hands!"

He took counsel with his men.

"Let three of ye remain hère," he said finally, "an' the rest of us will attack the back door. Ye can keep Maingey with ye," he added contemptuously.

Nevertheless, Maingey spoke up.

"Ye'll never enter by door or window," said he, "except across their dead bodies, like the English soldiers an' Michael Dwyer, the outlaw. Why don't ye go on the roof an' tear out the thatch an' set fire to it? I warrant they'll come out quick enough then."

"Is it set fire to the thatch," said their leader, "an' it soaked with rain of a fortnight an' we without paraffin?"

Nevertheless, the idea of attacking the roof appealed to him, and with three of the others, he stole around to the back of the house. A minute afterward, Maingey followed them. He had no relish to be in front of Shamus Dan's gun.

The Murphys' leader sent two of his men on to the roof, which was easily reached from the back, and went with another to where he could gather a pile of stones. Not even in this work could he make Maingey take a hahd, for the latter was already preparing his alibi against the time when the law would call the clan to an accounting.

It was not long before the defenders realized the new tactics employed against them. Mary Casey was the first to hear the scuffling on the roof. In the few minutes' silence after the firing of Shamus Dan's shot, she had crept over near him in terror. Had he killed some one? Would they hang him? were the thoughts that crossed her mind, and all she could do was to touch

her lover and feel that he was still alive, doubting the evidence of her eyes.

Shamus Dan listened to the work on the roof.

"My God!" he said. "They'll set fire to it!"

"They can't do that," broke in Patch Daly, "for it's a fortnight's rain that's lyin' in it. But if they have a crowbar, they'll dig a hole in it quick enough."

At that moment the first stone loosened from the hill behind the cottage came crashing against the back door, then another and another. Those within could hear several more strike dully against the walls, and guessed that the Murphys were rolling them downhill and not throwing them.

"A couple of big ones at that rate," said Shamus Dan grimly, "and that will be the end of the door."

Rain began to fall heavily from one of those sudden clouds that in the clearest sky come up from the Atlantic and sweep the hills. But it had no effect on the fierce men on the roof or on the two who were digging out the largest stones to roll against the door. Time and again the door was saved because the ground to the back of it had become a marsh. Within the cottage, Shamus Dan, having found a corner from which he could safely command both the back door and the spot where the roof was being dug out, kept his gun ready. In his old place beside the window, Mary Casey stood ready to defend herself with the weapon her wit had suggested; beside her was the pot of boiling water. Patch Daly stood moveless by the other window.

After a while the men outside became impatient, for their time was ebbing fast. Over half an hour had gone by since Father Fallon had ridden toward the village, and in another half hour at the outside the police would arrive.

The defenders heard the leader of the Murphys call out to his men in front, and in response the sandbags

in the window were riddled and the sand began to pour out of them freely. From the renewed digging on the roof, bits of it began to fall on the floor. To make things worse, Patch Daly's courage showed signs of waning.

"They have us now," said he, "an' you might as well give in, Shamus Dan. An' sure in a week or two yourself an' herself can aisily meet in Cork or somewhere else an' go off without their knowin' it."

Shamus Dan crept on hands and knees to the corner where Mary Casey stood. The pellets had begun to spatter against the wall.

"Will you go with them, Mary," he said, "or will we fight it out?"

She drew herself up proudly, then, in the sheltering corner where he stood beside her.

"If you take me with you, Shamus Dan, it's as a brave man you'll take me with you, livin' or dead, an' not like a coward that would steal in the night. But let Patch Daly go his way if he will."

Patch Daly didn't answer, but stood his ground. Two more shots swished through the window, and the pellets, ricocheting from the wall, fell at their feet. Then, with a frightful crash, a huge boulder came hurtling through the door and landed in the middle of the floor.

It seemed all over now, but fast on the crash, there came a cry from outside; not the cry of triumph those within expected, but a cry of terror.

"Run!" it said. "Run for yeer lives! Cnoc-na-coppalleen is moving!" The stone that had crashed through the door had been belched out of the hillside half a mile above; and fast on its tracks came an avalanche of smaller stones, spattering against the walls of the cottage as the shot had spattered a moment before.

For an instant the three desperate people in the cottage were bewildered.

Then they heard the men on the roof jump to the ground and run across the yard, and Patch Daly shouted:

"Through the window, for God's sake, through the window, Shamus Dan! Don't go out the back door! The bog on Cnoc-na-coppalleen is movin'!"

They clambered through without a word and, without looking back, ran down the mountain road, Shamus Dan and Mary Casey hand in hand and Patch Daly well ahead of them. Stones of all kinds went flying past them and more than once struck them. On, on, on they went until they came to the crossroads of Ardmoniel, and there found the priest and the constabulary, who had just arrived and were holding a minute's frightened council.

Not one of the Murphys was to be seen; they had scattered to their several homes, to warn their families against the impending tragedy. All, that is, except Maingey Murphy, whose mangled corpse was lying in the quarry behind the cottage, destined in a moment to be tossed about in the sea of peat that was now rushing madly down the hillside, driving great boulders before it and tearing the scattered trees groaning from their roots. He had sheltered in the quarry from the rain, and had been crushed under the first torrent of stones that had fallen into it, for he could not hear his clansman's warning.

V.

The dawn was at hand, but there was not yet light enough for the priest and his companions to see the full disaster. It was only when Patch Daly had gasped out the truth that they realized it. At the realization, the priest went pale and turned to the police.

"Let ye scatter, scatter!" he said. "For if the bog is moving, 'twill be worse than the moving bog of Glenflesk. And let ye warn every one between here and the village, for I think the bog

will never stop until it gets to the river." And he put spurs to his own horse and galloped across the fields to the nearest houses.

The police got down from the car upon which they had come and hurried to act on his advice. Patch Daly, Shamus Dan, and Mary Casey were left alone on the road with the driver of the car.

"Take us to the village," Shamus Dan said, "and we'll warn the people there."

They climbed onto the car, and the driver whipped up his horse without delay, for already the loosened stones were at their heels. Even though the mountain proper stopped at the crossroads, the decline continued down to the river, and nothing but a miracle could stop the bog.

The miracle did not happen. The bog came on, on, on. Its first great speed was lessened when it reached the less steep ground, but its course was irresistible. The priest was right—the village was doomed. Before an hour, its wreckage would be floating in the swollen, murky river.

Here and there those on the car stopped at a house, and soon the road to the village was populous with refugees. As the dawn crept over the mountain, they could see field after field that brave toil had reclaimed disappear under the flood of peat. House after house was hidden from their view, and now and again the sight of a flying figure would fill them with pity and terror.

It was but the work of minutes to rouse the village and warn its inhabitants to cross the river by a bridge that led to higher ground. Mary Casey, cold and shivering in the rain, stood in the center of the market place and watched Shamus Dan as he rushed from house to house to warn the people she hated.

Presently the country people began

to come in, ill clad and panic-stricken, and the rush across the bridge began. Shamus Dan, Mary Casey, and Patch Daly held together, and when at last the place of safety was reached, they went apart to the far end of the field. Nobody had seemed to heed them, the women and helpless men being overcome by their own misfortunes, many of them wounded, some dying.

After a while a great hush fell over the crowd; the bog had almost reached the village. Surely it must stop there? Surely that could not be wiped out? But the work of destruction continued, and soon, crumbling, cracking, falling, the village itself began to disappear into the peat. Then there broke out a loud lamentation and weeping, and men and women, with mingled prayers and curses, fell on their knees.

To Mary Casey it was but the crumbling of so much clay; in her mind there was but one thought.

"Let you go among the people, Patch," she said, "an' find whether Maingey Murphy is with the livin' or the dead."

As she said this, she clasped Shamus Dan's hand more tightly. She found in his touch the only reassurance she cared for. Patch Daly went from them and soon returned.

"There's no trace of Maingey," he said, "an' the Murphys are lookin' for ye. Let ye steal up by this fence. There's the priest's horse in the next field an' let ye mount him an' ride as hard as ye can to Milltown. Ye could catch a train there an' be off before they know where ye are. I'll come after ye an' bring back the horse. Go now, an' may the grace of God go with ye."

They stole up by the fence and, finding the horse, mounted him and rode for the station at Milltown. It was not a moment too soon. In the first shock of the tragedy, they had been forgotten, but as the Murphys, learning of

Maingey's fate, moved among the crowd, their deed began again to take its awful shape in the eyes of the people. Soon the rumor swept through the whole throng that this disaster was God's judgment on the parish for the crime that had been committed. The priest, giving the last rites to the dying, had no time to control the people, but the leader of the Murphys angrily addressed them.

"No man but us will have a hand in it," he said, "for it's our name that's been blackened an' it's wan of our clan that's dead because of them two."

Then, calling his clansmen, they began to search for the fugitives. They could not find them, but they soon found Patch Daly lying perdu in a ditch. They dragged him out and told him to speak, but he swore he hadn't seen the lovers again after leaving the cottage. Nevertheless, they beat him into unconsciousness and continued on their way. They soon found a man who had met the flying couple, and the leader of the Murphys, commandeering his horse, set out after them.

Shamus Dan and Mary Casey were still a mile from their goal when they heard the clatter of hoofs behind them. They guessed what it meant, and Shamus Dan stopped the horse and jumped to the ground.

"Let you ride on," he said, "and I'll meet them here."

But her answer was to dismount and stand beside him without a word. They listened and Shamus Dan said:

"There's only one horse."

They hid in the bushes and waited for the enemy to come. They had no plan of escape—the night's happenings had dulled their wits—but as the leader of the Murphys came abreast of them, Shamus Dan, on an impulse, leaped out and seized his horse's bridle, unshipping him. Like a flash, Shamus Dan fell on his adversary and searched him for a weapon. He found a revolver

and threw it toward Mary Casey, who picked it up and waited. But Shamus Dan said to the man under him, who was half stunned by the fall:

"Get up, Shaun Rooah. I have no wish to harm you. But if it's a fight you want, we can fight it out fair, here and now."

The grim mountain man looked at Shamus Dan for a second, too bewildered to speak. Then his admiration for his enemy's mettle overcame him.

"I'd have shot you dead, Shamus Dan," he said, "if I'd got the chance, an' it's a fair fight you're offerin' me now. I'll not fight you, Shamus Dan, even if they call me a coward for it, for you're a better man than him that's dead an' you've earned the woman."

He put out his hand, and Shamus Dan took it. Then, without a sign that he was aware of Mary Casey's pres-

ence, Shaun Rooah, leader of the Murphys, rode back shamefacedly toward his own people.

VI.

When, a few days later, having been duly wed, their ship had passed the Fastnet, Shamus Dan and Mary Casey stood watching the last hills of Ireland.

"There are the Reeks now," he said, "and belike that is Carntwhill, and behind it is Cnoc-na-coppalleen."

"Maybe we'll see them again some time," she murmured, her voice breaking, "for it's there I had the freedom of my fine dreams an' it's often I'll be thinkin' of them."

"There's more freedom where we're going to, alanna."

"Aye, maybe there is, Shamus Dan, an' sure, anyway, it would be a queer life that had no sorrow in it."



THE WAYFARERS

WE take the little roads of dawn,
And some end soon and some go far;
But we return on roads of dusk
At time of evening star.

We take the little roads of life,
And some end soon and some go far;
But we turn back, if turn we can,
At life's first twilight star.

We all come back to love and home
Save him—God pity him!—
Who goes so far, when he returns,
He finds the doorway dim;

He finds an empty doorway dim
And shadows on the floor,
And though he call from dark to dawn,
Love answers him no more!

ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

THE DIVINE SARAH

THE divine one, the immortal one, the supreme and coruscant Sarah has just announced, through her undying and obsequious ally, the Press of the United States, that for the last time she will "appear in our midst" and, in spite of physical impairment, display for us the flickering embers of her histrionic greatness.

There is nothing particularly emotional in the advertised good-bys of even the greatest artists. Their spectacular pathos and the pyrotechnical glare of their flamboyant farewells seem trite. But as I read the cabled announcement of Sarah's farewell, my spirits sank. The note of finality was by no means new, but it was disconcerting. The artist should disappear sedately. She should never say good-by.

That the divine Sarah will ever do anything so conventional as to "appear for the last time," with a duly advertised "positively final performance," I cannot and will not believe. She might expire on the stage, as a climax to an exhausting scene; she might be carried from the theater, swooning and spent; but to say good-by, while the crowd applauded and cheered, and then to sit calmly down next morning to a boiled-egg breakfast—that is not my idea of the immortal one.

You see, Sarah has really been my education—my journalistic impetus, if I may say it, or perhaps I might better call her my encouragement. It was Sarah who first made me feel "upnish" and pleased with myself—and that means much to a nervous man. As long ago as the old days of the Hoffman House, I chatted with her, and when she appeared in the United States the next time, she called me by name! As soon as I entered her apartment, she rose and greeted me as an old friend. I being human, that made a tremendous hit with me. Four years had passed, and the divine one remembered me! The fact that she remembered everybody else might have militated against my conceit, but it didn't. It seemed so wonderful that a woman like Sarah should recall the name of a far-off journalist—who shall say that I am not ingenuous?—and I was fearfully elated about it all. All the long-haired ones and the hangers-on and the almost-European Americans that deign to inhabit New York were there, and the lovely lady rose and uttered my name. *C'était épant!* (Oh, of course I speak French. It is one of my early blemishes.)

As I reperuse the announcement of her reappearance, I see myself, a trifle

overwhelmed, at her house in Paris, at No. 56 Boulevard Pereire—by appointment, if you please. She had been affable enough to promise to receive me, and I was not sufficiently cynical to suspect that, as she was on the eve of a new American tour, there might be method in her madness.

"She wouldn't have worried about you," said a colleague scornfully, "if she had not contemplated another visit to New York."

I thought he was jealous, and deigned no reply. That has always been one feature of Sarah's greatness—to make each and every one believe that she was especially interested in *him*, to the exclusion of all others. I should have been ashamed to insinuate that I was merely one cog in the giant wheel of her stupendous self-advertisement. Yet perhaps I was. Ordinarily I don't like being a cog—it is undignified to be a cog—but in the case of Sarah, I should not mind a bit. Better to be a cog than nothing at all.

I recall that mystic house in the Boulevard Pereire, and the butler. Really, I loathe butlers. They are such sycophants. This one eyes me suspiciously, but perhaps I look like a "reportaire," as they call every American journalist in Paris, and though, in my serene mind, I do not fancy the idea at all, it goes, on this occasion. The butler permits me to enter, and even leads the way.

Sarah's house, like her clothes, is quite indescribable. I am taken to a set of rooms, if I can call them rooms. They are dark and rather cheerless. I try to feel at my ease, but I dare not loll. I suppose they are reception rooms, or audience chambers, or something of that ilk. The walls are so thickly hung with pictures that their identity is lost. I see rugs and vases and images and easels and antique books and medals and bric-a-brac, curios, oddments, strange bits, and gro-

tesque souvenirs, but all in semiobscurity. I look around for an electric switch, with the vandalistic idea of turning on the rude white light and examining it all, but I find no switch. There are views of Sarah, in all styles, except that there are no pictures of her girlhood. I have never imagined her standing with reluctant feet. It would be too silly, and so unnecessary.

I should not call the house in the Boulevard Pereire exhilarating. I feel as if I were at the British Museum or the Louvre or some of the musty-fusty places that the Baedeker satellites affect. I try to imagine Sarah sitting in this museum and tatting. I picture her calling in the cook and saying: "To-day we will have some mutton stew and a rice pudding." I am not a bit at my ease.

I am conducted upstairs by a smiling secretary. When Sarah's secretary smiles, all her visitors realize that 'tis well. She has several secretaries, and at her suggestion, they smile. Possibly when she is in her tantrums—though I cordially believe that those tantrums are mere "newspaper stories" and bad ones at that—they scowl. Some say that the secretaries are real indications of the Sarah mood.

The person who has me in tow, says: "In one little moment madame will be with you."

It is like waiting to see the pope at the Vatican, but more amusing. Sarah is really a circus, and always has been, and there is no *blague* about that either.

I am damp with emotional perspiration, and the weather is warm. Paris can be quite torrid, as you know. As I enter the divine one's apartment, several secretaries are heaping coals on the fire in the grate. Madame loves heat, but I almost wilt. It is like a Turkish bath, which is very refreshing—when you happen to be unclad for its proper enjoyment.

Then I am confronted by Sarah, in her eminent negligee. And let me say that it was surely the immortal one who invented the loose garb that women call negligee. You see, she never had a figure to incase in corsets or juggle into shape, so all she needed was some picturesque laxity of drapery.

I note the lack of make-up, or the apparent lack. Her hair is straw-colored, for she has never been stupid about hair. She affects the tint that suits her best. I never understand why any woman is finicky enough to bother about explaining that the color of her hair is natural. That which is natural isn't always pretty. I am sure that if Sarah thought she looked well in blue hair, she would wear it. And very sensible, too!

Sarah talks charmingly, with the ease of the cultured. There is no effort, and there is no foolish ice-breaking. Ice could not live in the same atmosphere as Sarah. We chat about everything, and of course she is interested in me—not aggressively so, but sufficiently to suggest that this is no common or garden "interview." Sarah's "liquid voice" is used in conversation. The raspy, strident note that she utters in drama occurs only when she stabs a gentleman with a hatpin or protects her womanhood with a carving knife. Her speaking voice is rather soothing than otherwise, and even a bit monotonous. It is her stock in trade, and all the world has acclaimed it. So Sarah holds on to that which is good.

She tells me droll things. I suppose if I had been a serious old party with whiskers, she would have adapted herself to that sort of me. But Sarah knows human nature. That has been her long suit. She "perceives" the character of her visitor. Possibly she realizes that I am a flippant and light-hearted entity, so she entertains me. Although Sarah never indulges in the brazenly affectionate criticisms of New

York that the less brainy actress deems appropriate, she is clever enough to love dear America, in an intelligent way. She says things for the "masses," but she assumes that the masses have at least some grain of understanding. The usual actress regards the *plebs* in a somewhat humiliating way. Sarah, for instance, says that she is interested in New York! She has tripped across the Atlantic every four or five years and has always noted the changes in the great American metropolis. She does not belittle Europe—as the incoming actress loves to do while she laughs in her sleeve—but she suggests that in Paris everything is stationary, and that in America everything is new!

I like that idea, don't you? Sarah always harps on it, and it does very well for criticism. She antagonizes neither Paris nor New York. Paris revels in being stationary—one cannot improve upon a supremely good thing—and New York is fond of its incessant novelty. Sarah scores. She calls all newspaper men her "friends," and she is immensely fond of them. Affectionate Sarah!

"New York sheds its skin," says Sarah. "It is a new animal."

She adores to be asked why she works so hard, and why she never relaxes. If, during her next tour, any youthful interviewer desires to make an impression upon her, I advise him to ask her that, and to inject a little awe into his tones.

"It is my life," she always says. "If I had stayed at the Comédie Française after I had made my great success, I should now be rich and fat and nobody. I should have tons of money in beautiful coffers, and should be disgustingly comfortable and more disgustingly uninteresting. I did not stay at the Comédie Française. I preferred to work; I loved to travel; I elected to circle the globe and do things—carry

the art of France into foreign countries. I am like that. It is my life."

Sarah has told me that many times, and always with keen enjoyment. It is her hobby, and there is a good deal of wholesomeness in it. I have never been able to "see" the divine one at the Comédie Française, with its dull traditions and its even perfection of acting. Personally, I admire the Comédie Française, admire it so much that I never visit it. It makes me feel so old and so hatefully peaceful. All the finest traditions, you know—and all that sort of thing. Ask Sarah why she always plays *Camille*, and she will tell you that it is so human and that it never ages. The arduous rôle never tires her, she insists, and she is not at all surprised that star actresses love the Lady of the Camellias. Not that she ever criticizes other actresses. I only wish she would! My greatest desire has always been to ask her what she thought of Eleonora Duse, but I never dared! The idea of noting a flame in the Sarah eye, and perhaps a mood in the Sarah atmosphere, affrighted me. I do not know what Sarah thought of the actress who at one time threatened to be a serious rival.

Sarah is a great believer in schools or, as she calls them, *conservatoires*. She is fond of giving advice to aspirants, and of course she can afford to do it magnanimously. She says that young stage people must study. Girls can become actresses without schools, if they have temperament, but their work will be much finer if they submit to training. There are a thousand tricks that are easy if you know 'em! She is keen on voice culture—as I said, her "liquid gold" is world famous—and she is always threatening to publish her views on the subject.

Time, in Sarah's company, passes remarkably quickly. There are no dull moments. She does not offer tea!

Positively, I have never seen Sarah drink tea. I cannot imagine her doing it. No perambulating tea table, with little silly cups, a silver teapot, and foolish cakes, for the immortal one.

I love the non-tea-drinking actress, for many and many a time I have been miserably self-conscious trying to balance a cup in one hand and a cake in the other, while I was pretending to be at my ease and posing as splendidly nonchalant. The divine one offers no refreshments other than the tonic of her own unrivaled personality.

I see myself again in the adorable one's dressing room at the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt, after the second act of "Lorenzaccio." It is years after the visit to the Boulevard Pereire, and I am much older, though Sarah of course isn't.

Oddly enough, my much vaunted sense of humor refuses to rescue me from the amusing solemnity of that dressing-room visit. She has sent me a card bearing the legend: "Madame Sarah Bernhardt" as a sort of open sesame, which one needs sorely in Paris, where the American journalist is looked upon as a cross between a confidence man and a wine tout. This is quite droll after you have accustomed yourself to it, and rather neat when you have realized its significance.

I reach Sarah after considerable circumambulation. First of all there is a room, flowered like a garden, with huge hydrangeas, orchids, and everything that is beautifully expensive. Rugs, books, and porcelains are in all directions, but it is merely an anteroom, and it is Sarahless. Following in my trail are dozens of frroufrouing ladies and fiercely bewhiskered gentlemen, all bearing cards similar to mine. Oh, I am only one of many, but, after all, this is Paris! We reach a door that is guarded jealously by a menial with courtly manners. He seems to say, but

does not say: "You are now in the vicinity of the divine one. I advise you to behave. Think of your privilege."

We are ushered into another room that is quite Marie-Antoinettish in its furniture scheme. Even this does not inclose Sarah. She is wise enough to make us long. She believes in the efficacy of the hanker. We are now on the alert and becoming "all wrought up." Shall we ever reach Sarah, or shall we be piloted through these rooms until our very souls rebel at the fatigues of the ceremony?

Finally we get to the *sanctum sanctorum*, the dressing room of the eternally gorgeous one. All the froufrouing ladies and the fiercely bewhiskered gentlemen gasp in relief. It is as if their great ambition in life were on the verge of being gratified, after heartbreaking struggles.

Sarah bows and smiles and seems to say: "Yes, loved ones, it is really I." It is a deferential, semimelancholy smile—nothing joyous about it in the least. She has been acting on the stage, and that is much easier than acting off it. Sarah is wonderful, on and off, and the acting is invariably artistic. A maid, in the garb of a nurse, is standing by the adorable one and insisting that she take a little liquid nourishment. The liquid nourishment is contained in a gold cup, and Sarah just moistens her lips—apparently more to please the nurse than to refresh her inner self. I am not permitted to see what the gold cup contains, but I imagine all sorts of wonderful beverages. Perhaps the elixir of life! Or perchance a few precious drops from the fountain of eternal youth, nicely diluted and with the chill off!

Sarah is like a queen receiving homage—more so, I should say. She is fearfully gracious, but tired and nervous. In fact, she is exquisitely nervous, and says so. She has been very ill, but rather than disappoint her beloved friends, her audience, she has disobeyed her physician and elected to appear.

I am quite spellbound, and I think—I say *think*—that Sarah realizes it. Again I refuse to believe that she is so adorable simply because she has just planned another American tour. The idea merely shoots through my recalcitrant mind. She calls me by name, and says a few words, and moistens her dry lips from the golden cup, and I hate all the froufrouing women and the fiercely bewhiskered men who are hanging on her every utterance, even on those meant for *me*. They all seem so greedy.

We are obliged to leave soon, as there is an audience in front and a third act has to be played. I wish that the nurse would let me take one sip from the gold cup, as I feel quite weak and ludicrously excited—and such a callous "party" as I am, too!

I reread the cabled announcement of her reappearance, and I shiver a little. Under the circumstances, there must be a certain morbid appeal to a sensational community. Will the magnificent art of the divine Sarah be sacrificed on the shrine of curiosity mongers? That would be the saddest finale one could imagine.

Let us wait and see. Sarah will do something. She has never yet been caught napping, and her ingenuity is unfailing.



Ainslee's Open Door

Will Polygamy Help Europe?

THOSE who make it their business to study the phenomena of human society and the manifold relations of the sexes are gravely weighing and discussing the ultimate effect of the male depopulation of Europe owing to the toll of life taken by war. Millions of marriageable single men have given up their lives on the field of battle. It has been calculated that a whole generation of men has been swept away in France; Russia and England have seen hosts of their flowering youth destroyed; while the losses of Germany are appalling. Plans for perpetuating the races that have met with such terrible slaughter have already been formulated and advanced to offset the abnormal sex condition that will follow the widespread decimation of the European male. The erstwhile excitement concerning "war brides" demonstrated the feeling about one of the schemes to augment population, and latterly there has been a movement to encourage girls, as a patriotic duty, to marry the helpless and crippled relicts of the scenes of carnage. But neither of these measures will remedy the disturbed equipoise of the sexes.

One close observer pointed out that, even before the war, there were about a million and a quarter more women than men in England, and, taken together with the losses of youth in the ranks, it is estimated that one out of four Englishwomen of the present generation will be forced to remain in spinsterhood, unless some system of honorable polygamy be promoted among the people. At which suggestion, the righteous Britisher raises his hands in indignation and horror, forgetting, of course, that, under his accepted and approved social conditions, he is a supporter of polygyny. Here it must be explained that the difference between polygamy and polygyny is well defined, the former being the recognized plurality of wives, the latter merely the indulgence of the instinct of "sexual variety" with which man is held by many to be especially and exclusively gifted.

In France, Germany, and Russia, they face this vital issue of future female preponderance more frankly than the Anglo-Saxons, and there are earnest apostles of propaganda for the establishment of government sanctioned and protected polygamy, similar to that adopted in Germany after the Thirty Years' War, when marriage and population called for drastic and unprecedented action. Among these advanced thinkers of Continental Europe it is maintained that biological necessity and ethical ideas alone shape the sexual morality of mankind; and that a preponderance of women in a tribe or race has, from most ancient times, automatically effected a state of polygamy, as, on the other hand, a preponderance of males has been the cause of polyandry in the history of human marriage. It is Nature keeping her balance.

Regarding the right or wrong of so complex and momentous a matter, there have been opinions of all degrees and kinds, from enthusiastic advocacy to downright anathema. Schopenhauer, for instance, naïvely assumed that every normal

man desires more than one wife; while Schlegel scathingly denounced plurality of wives as nothing but pandering to animal appetite. We do not propose to take up the issue in our limited space. All we know is that both animals and man have been polygamous or monogamous according to some instinct or reason. Birds are generally monogamous, with the familiar exception of gallinaceous genera. Monkeys are also largely monogamous. On the other hand, deer and sea lions are regularly polygamous.

With man, polygamy has been practiced, at one time or another, from Nineveh onward, and it has been recorded among peoples as widely separated as inhabitants of Australia and Greenland, common alike in African tribes and among American Indians, with the notable exception of the Iroquois. The East has particularly encouraged the plurality of wives or women in a household. India, Turkey, China, Japan, and Persia have all tried the institution in various forms. Primevally, however, polygamy has been usually an economic factor in the life of a race, which, in due course of development, degenerated into self-indulgence and display of power and wealth. Withal, it is proved by science that sexual promiscuity never prevailed among primitive people to the extent that it prevails in the highly civilized nations of to-day. And, add our high authorities, to offset our contempt of polygamous practices, in no part of the world is polygyny so prevalent as in Christendom!

But to return to the European situation which opens up such revolutionary social vistas, it is one of those ironic and ever-present paradoxes of life that the feminists should have invaded and captured Turkey, the very stronghold of polygamy, just when the problem of female preponderance looms large upon the horizon of the Western world. Polygamy has an archenemy in the feminists, who desire above all things to be emancipated from male supremacy; and there is no custom that bespeaks male supremacy so absolutely as plural wives or multiple concubines. Polygamy makes polyps of women, say the feminists. And this brings us to the nub of the whole present difficulty: How will England, France, and Germany dare attempt anything resembling polygamy with the emancipated woman irrevocably opposed to it? In analyzing the altogether peculiar phases of this paramount question, Ellen Key, the famous Swedish philosopher, predicts that there will be precipitated an epochal struggle of the sexes.

Gypsies in Motor Cars!

STEVENSON was optimistic enough to declare that "there is nobody under thirty so dead but his heart will stir a little at the sight of a gypsies' camp."

If it were true in his time—and even that seems a little doubtful—it is swiftly becoming less and less true with the passing years. A few months ago a convention of gypsies was held in Fresno, California, and we have it on good authority that many who attended "went in motor cars of their own." The picture suggested is scarcely one to stir the heart. With no strain of the imagination, we can suspect these progressive gypsies of possessing, also, such tokens of respectability as umbrellas and rubbers. Progress is all well enough within decent limits, but we prefer to see gypsies leave it alone. Here, for example, is a fine bit of sentiment for you:

"The daughter of Frank Fortuna, king of a band of gypsies, a bride of a few days, went to the convention with her husband, Joe Adams, in a two-thousand-dollar motor car, which he had given her as a wedding present."

How do you relish *that*—romance à la mode?

The plodding horses of a caravan, the gaudy and circusy wagons, the camp at twilight under a sheltering elm, crones telling fortunes by the camp fire—oh, visions of youth, where are you now? Gone on the trail of the bison and the red man, vanished in the golden dust of yesterday's sunset. To-morrow the gypsy king will waken by the gong of an alarm clock; the queen will cook breakfast on a patent portable stove and store up some hot coffee for luncheon in a thermos bottle; the little gypsies, all hygienically clothed, will be fed some certified mild; then "all aboard," while the chauffeur sits at attention before the self-starter.

True to heredity, the gypsies must keep ever on the move; but how absurd it seems to behold them making their pilgrimage from nowhere to nowhere so fast!

Then, as if the idea of gypsies and motor cars in association were not dreadful enough in itself, another shock is waiting for us in the news that northern Missouri has encountered of late a gypsy motorist and his family who are mendicants: "At each town or village he begged gasoline and food and wondered if some one could spare an extra tire better than the rather worn one on the left rear wheel of the car." One of his dreams must have come true—if wishes were motors, beggars would ride. But alas for the sentimental public's cherished picture of the gypsy!

Stevenson, concluding the paragraph partly quoted in our foreword, burst out with this characteristic bit of enthusiasm: "There is some life in humanity yet; and youth will now and again find a brave word to say in dispraise of riches, and throw up a situation to go strolling with a knapsack." The truth is that there is too much life in humanity; too much to enjoy a mere stroll, too much to find contentment any longer in a gypsy wagon. *Dolce far niente* no more! We must burn up the road. We must speed, speed, speed, even if we are only on a pilgrimage from nowhere to nowhere.

C. P. C.

More About Birth Control

WHAT does birth control mean? The power to decide for the child unborn whether it is to be or not to be—the power of life or death.

Shall this power be given by legislative act into the hands of the doctors? Shall it be given through pamphleteered and platformed dissemination into the hands of laymen? Would you be willing to see the noblest individual of your acquaintance endowed with power to decree life or death, and to decree it in secret, solely of his own wisdom and prescience? The answer is, "No human being is noble enough or wise enough to be intrusted with *secret powers of life or death*."

The known criminal cannot be put out of life by one human being's secret power; only on the findings of twelve men of proved disinterestedness. And—think about this—there is only one crime for which the death penalty is permitted—the *crime of life taking*.

Physicians, in receiving their degrees, take oath against that form of life taking known as birth control. Religion, from its even higher standpoint, has always condemned it. Hence we see that both law and ethics, being, as they are, the emanation from and the development of mankind's higher feeling for humanity, have—on their spiritual side—tended more and more to emphasize

the value of life and the duty of living; and, in the concrete letter, have shaped themselves through the advancing centuries more and more against despotic and secret powers of death.

If you credit "inspired" medical articles in the press, you will be forced to believe that ninety per cent of humanity is unfit to have progeny. Nonsense! From Canada comes the happy news that of the men rejected by the army authorities, only a negligible per cent were "unsafe" as parents. Nature eliminates the unfit by her own methods of birth control. Humanity is not doddering with disease. In the main, it is gloriously fit for its job. Some day, public opinion—grown wise with grief—will censor all medical "scare" articles out of its newspapers and magazines.

The present agitation for birth control follows naturally on the twilight-sleep literature with which we were deluged last year, and which—it is safe to say—has had only one result—the evil result of terrifying young women with mental images of childbed agonies and dangers. How much more benign is nature than the medical theorist! Witness the healthy, happy mothers who were told by physicians that they could not bear living children, or would lose their own lives in the attempt.

The argument most thrust forward by birth-control advocates is this—the evil of bringing children to birth in dire poverty. Everything that will alleviate poverty should be done. But birth control is no remedy. It is an added evil. It would deprive the race and the nation, and brutalize the individual by stultifying the parent nature. Bearing children does not afflict the poor, though being unable to provide for them does.

Public endeavor is already tending toward endowment for mothers, because the advancing thought of humanity sees that in home and the home love is its chief moral safeguard and its deepest urge to spiritual progress. The nation wants all the children it can beget; and it wants them not institutionized, but homed. In fighting, not birth, but poverty, we fight shoulder to shoulder with Nature, the Abundant One, not against her.

As a theory, birth control belongs with the other disastrous "isms" that attempt to materialize and make machined humanity. It is to morals what cubism is to art—i. e. the effort, through willful lawbreaking, to substitute self-indulged sensation for natural expression as the aim to be striven for. Viewed from the standpoint of science and logic, it is the nonprincipled and impracticable theory that a thing which is in itself abnormal and distorted can be *systematized* and made *lawful* and a *benefit* to society!

B. C.



ROMANCE in Salt Lake: One heart that beats as seven.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

HAVE you read the two short stories in this number to which we particularly called your attention in our last talk, "The One-Sixteenth," by Marie Conway Oemler, and "Holding the Mirror Up to Art," by Walter Prichard Eaton? Don't you agree with us that they are stories of unusual distinction? As a matter of fact, we like all of the fiction in this number, from Wolff's powerful little novelette to Maurice Joy's stirring romance of "Shamus Dan." We hope you share our liking, for this AINSLEE'S is a fair indication of what you may expect in November.

In the complete novelette, "The Affairs of Fentress," Kate Trimble Sharber has evolved a striking situation from the philanderings of a brilliant young author who is supposed to be absorbing local color in an old Southern city. Mrs. Sharber's gift for clean-cut characterization makes it impossible merely to read her people; you must know them and love them and hate them just as they know and love and hate one another.

Among the contributors of short stories to the November AINSLEE'S are William Almon Wolff and Bonnie R. Ginger, whose work you have read in this number; Joseph Ernest, author of "Brindamour;" Katherine Baker and I. A. R. Wylie, who contributes the first episode of a sprightly new series called "The Duchess in Pursuit."

Payson Terhune deserves a great deal of praise for the Super-women stories. He has handled stories bristling with possibilities of offensive treatment in the very best of taste. He has achieved sophistication without a resort to the smartness so much in vogue just now, and has thrown a new and most interesting light on a number of women of whom we have all been wont to speak without knowing much about them."

Madame Steinheil, whose trial was the talk of the day not so many years ago, is the subject of the next of Mr. Terhune's "Stories of the Super-women."



WE were interested in D. E. W.'s editorial in "AINSLEE'S Open Door" concerning polygamy as a means of repopulating Europe after the war. Aside from the natural abhorrence most of us would feel at such a scheme, we very much doubt if it would fulfill its purpose. We have always understood that in modern, complex civilizations, a people practicing polygamy deteriorates in quantity as well as in quality. The men who can afford to maintain establishments for plural wives are apt to be those who have devoted the best part of their lives to the accumulation of wealth—elderly, vitiated, anything but the ideal stock with which to father a nation. Each young and beautiful woman added to their establishments leaves one less ideal mate for the virile youth who has just begun his fight in life. He must take what is left, or wait until he himself is no longer in his prime.



THIS letter, from D. T., of New York, is typical of many: "I don't often feel impelled to write to a magazine, but I feel that Mr. Albert

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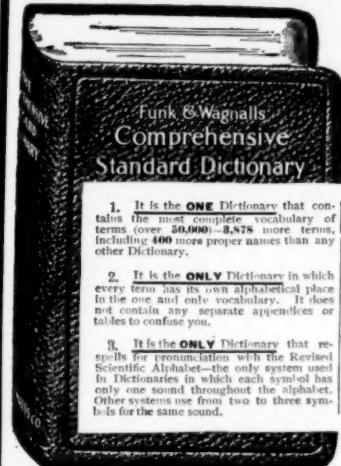
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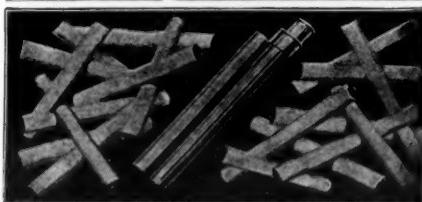
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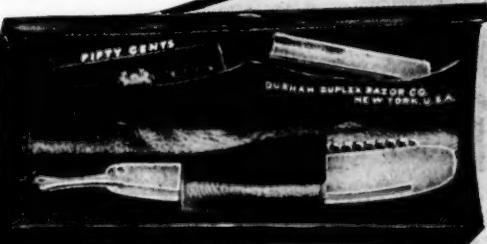
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